NEW VIEWS OF HEAVEN

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Mrs. D. S. Church
with the compliments &
regards of
W. W. Argelon
Highland Falls on Hudson
March 21st. 1896.

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Six Lectures

ON THE INHABITANTS, PHENOMENA, AND ORDER OF THE WORLD TO COME

BY THE

REV. ROBERT R. RODGERS

"*He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*"—PROV. xviii. 13.

SECOND EDITION

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TO THE

MEMORY

OF MY

Beloved and Honoured Friend and Counsellor,

ISAAC A. BEST,

WITH WHOM IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO LABOUR

FOR NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS DEDICATED WITH EVERY SENTIMENT

OF AFFECTION.

PREFACE.

THESE Lectures are intended to illustrate the New Church philosophy of the future life. Swedenborg has said all that can be said on the subject, at least for many years to come; but he has spoken only to the student. Other writers have explained his meaning, and confirmed it by evidence from experience, nature, and the Word of God. To many of these I am indebted for some word, suggestion, hint, or illustration, and I thankfully acknowledge their help. Each

writer has his own particular way of putting what many know, and it is hoped that on this account, there may be room and use in the world for *New Views of Heaven.*

March 1890.

CONTENTS.

I.

OTHER-WORLDLINESS:

Reasons for the Study and Daily Thought of Heaven.

WHATEVER may be our opinion of man's condition after death, as Christians, we are all perfectly agreed,—and that is something,—that this world is only a temporary home, and that we shall all die. There are those who affect to know nothing of the future life; and there are others who distinctly affirm, that to man, the same as to all other animals, death is the end of being. One thing, however, is beyond dispute, and that is, that with the rarest exceptions, belief in the future life is universal, and exists with equal strength both among the civilized and savage. Herbert Spencer shows us, that in all parts of the earth

the belief is either expressed or implied, that each person is double, and that when he dies naturally, his other self survives. In his *Sociology*, vol. i. p. 198, he says, "Among tribes who say that death is annihilation, we yet commonly find such inconsequent beliefs as those of some Africans visited by Schweinfurth, who shunned certain caves from dread of the evil spirits or fugitives who had died in them." But we are not to believe anything because it is held either by the few or the many, but because we ourselves can see that it is based on rational evidence. Every man is bound to be true to himself. "If he is blind, or purblind, or deaf to heavenly voices, let him not pretend to see or hear;" on the other hand, "and which is much harder, let him not despise those who see or hear, where he only recognises darkness or silence."

In relation to the future life, God has withheld nothing in the Bible, which in times past it was good for man to know. When the rich man requested that some one might be sent from

the dead to warn his brethren, the reply was, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—Luke xvi. 31. In addition to the seed-truths of the Word of God, we believe in the New Church, that God has given the fullest information relating to the nature of the future life in the works of Swedenborg, and that no reasonable question can now be asked which cannot be answered. But here let me say, that as a teacher of religion, and as a believer in the life to come, I do not teach to order, or on authority, but on evidence. Speaking on this point, Mr. W. White remarks, "What is not credible in itself, I would not attempt to enforce by Bible, Church, or Pope."* And as Carlyle adds, "What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible, —that in God's name, leave uncredited; at your peril do not try believing that."

In announcing a future life, Revelation only tells us of a universally recognised fact. The

* White, *Other-World Order*, 54.

Bible does not make it true, but it is true by man's moral responsibility; it is true by his needs, it is true by his mind, it is true by the sense—that in heart and understanding, and in the attainments of all manly characteristics, he needs a future life wherein to develop and come to perfection. The announcement in the Word of God that man is immortal, is not given on unsupported authority, but on evidence. On the same grounds, when Swedenborg sketches for us the order, the nature, and the details of life in the world to come; what he says is not to be believed merely because he says it, but because it is justified by the evidence of the Word of God, the works of God, common sense, the spiritual needs of mankind, enlightened reason, and human necessity. St. Paul defines "faith" not as belief in mystery, not as ignorant credence, or submission to ecclesiastical authority,—but his declaration is, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."—Heb. xi. 1. As a New Church, here is our stand in relation to the future life; and because it is based on evidence,

we believe with the Apostle Paul, that at death "We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 Cor. v. 1. We also believe on the authority of the Master Himself, "The righteous shall go away into life eternal."—Matt. xxv. 46.

Turning to consider the popular theories of life in the future world, the first and most general belief is, that heaven is a reward for our present well-doing, and that hell is the penalty for wrong and sin. Almost any belief is better than none; and should it happen that existence in the spiritual world is only regarded either as a reward or a penalty, it is helpful to one section of the Christian public, and the first result is, that "other-worldliness," in the contemplation of life beyond the grave, becomes a check to vice and evil, and an aid to right living in the life that is. Perhaps it will be said, that to promise heaven as a reward for being good here, is to appeal to an exceedingly low and unworthy motive. And I admit at once that it is. But supposing there is no other motive to appeal to,

as in many cases it is to be feared there is not, what then? Motives are as various in their range and combination as the whole of mankind. The work of every-day life comes under precisely the same difficulty. Some men work for the bare wages, and because they are afraid of poverty, some work because they prefer it to starving, some work to make money and to be rich and powerful, some for the sake of maintaining their wives and families in honour and respectability, and some few for the sake of use, out of love to the neighbour, and because work is God's appointed outlet for practical religion: it therefore follows, that he who would enforce the duty of useful labour upon all classes of men, must appeal to every kind of motive. The Word of God is addressed to man in every state of mind, from the highest to the lowest, and, as a matter of sheer necessity, it therefore appeals to every motive in the human heart, and hence the Scripture representation that heaven is a reward.

It used to be an argument for righteousness,

that if it failed to ensure happiness here, it would secure it without fail in the world to come; and while we admit every argument for righteousness as valid; yet in the New Church we hold the new tenet of faith, that in the future life men are neither punished nor rewarded for what they have done while they were living on this side the grave. This is a new idea to many minds, and it is probably as startling as it is new. But if we will but stay for a moment to examine its claim to recognition, we shall discover, that it is fully justified by the words of the Lord Jesus, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you."—Luke xvii. 20, 21. If a keen-witted politician, holding the abominable doctrine of Gibbon, "That to the ignorant, all creeds are equally true; to the philosopher, all creeds are equally false; and to the politician, all creeds are equally useful;"—I say if a man of this character were to enter the world of spirits, he would try to act there precisely as he had acted here. He would not be changed

by death; but his character would go with him. His political trickery, his corruption in office, his double-dealing, his sagacious insincerity, and his dark deeds of recorded and unrecorded shame while living here, would need no punishment there, because he would be as base in all his actions in the next life as he was in this, and his baseness there would be the sole and only ground of his judgment. The kingdom of *darkness* is within him; and he has taken his own hell from this life into the world to come.

On the same ground of evidence, heaven as a reward of so many actions done here is not necessary. If a saint in this life passed into the other world, and ceased to love God and the neighbour,—ceased to believe and practise the commandments, and ceased to cherish gentleness, devotion, kindness, and sympathy towards others, the deeds of a saintly life on earth would be of no use in heaven, and the earthly angel would not be admitted into celestial felicity merely because he had served God here. A really good man is just the same in the next life as he is

here; he is in sympathy with goodness everywhere, he loves the truth by adoption, it is his nature to love it, his hand goes forth in service there precisely as it did here; kindness echoes in every word he utters, brotherly love surrounds him as an atmosphere, his actions there are all angelic, and because of that, and not for anything he did here, he becomes an angel and finds his home in heaven. No really good action in this world loses its reward; "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."—Mark ix. 41. The reward is, that the good done becomes the man himself. As an active motive to life, it goes with the doer through the dark valley, to repeat its beneficent service in the life to come, and as such "the kingdom of God is within you."

Regarded in this light, future rewards and future punishments based upon the deeds of the present life, are unnecessary, and the idea becomes untenable. The rationalist is perfectly justified in his denial of the orthodox doctrine that

seventy years of sin do not deserve an eternity of punishment; and that seventy years of service do not merit an eternity of bliss. The popular theory of rewards and punishments, is not compatible with the justice of God, nor indeed with justice at all. Basing our conclusions both on enlightened reason and the teaching of the Word of God, we therefore believe that every good deed is rewarded the moment it is done; by it the opposite evil is for ever cast out, and a heavenly affection takes its place. Go where he afterwards may of whom the good is affirmed, that active principle of service will repeat itself, because its life is self-renewing. The oak does not more certainly scatter the seeds of future forests, than the deed of love scatters in the ground of the honest and good heart the germs of its own perpetual existence. God takes nothing from man even now, without full recompense. Virtue is its own reward, and vice is its own punishment. Both are endowed with the power of everlasting reproduction. Here, vice is the parent of madhouses, prisons, and all the miseries

of the earth; and in the life to come its repetition will be the cause of all the misery there. Here, virtue strews the pathway of life with flowers, it opens the door to the outcast, the sick, and the forsaken; it is the angel in the home, and the sunshine of life; its presence in the world is the presence of peace, and by its influence the class antagonisms of society are adjusted, and men stand towards each other in the happy relationship of neighbourly love. In the future life, the history of goodness here, is repeated under heavenly conditions, and the promise is fulfilled, "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man,"—not according to what his work has been, but "according as his work *shall* be."—Rev. xxii. 12.

Another point in relation to the future life is, that the only possible explanation of our experience here is found in the fact, that there exists a world beyond the grave. This world is full of injustice; the innocent suffer and the guilty often escape; crime prospers and uprightness suffers want; might takes the best of

everything, and weakness only gets the leavings; and very often the experience of our present lot would be intolerable if it were not for the assurance that in the next world, God "will render unto every man according as his work shall be." In looking at the anomalies of the present life, our comfort is, that "we are not chance atoms floating in the atmosphere. We are born into life, under God's ordinance, to pass through its various stages, finding profit in its duties, labours, joys, and sufferings, merely as a preparation for the rest that remains for the people of God. And though we cannot trace the connection between any particular thing and the result in our nature, yet it is enough to know that every detail of life is supervised by a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness."

The contemplation of justice in the world to come prevents murmuring and dissatisfaction while we are here. 'It is said that servants and landlords can always tell how a man lives at home by the way he conducts himself abroad. If he finds fault with his food, they say it is

because he has not good food at home; and if he is happy and cheerful, and makes the best of his discomfort, they conclude that he has come from a home where everything was suited to his taste, and that he knows he is going back to the same enjoyment. What he now suffers is only temporary, it is a mere incident of travel, and in view of its termination in a home where all disagreeables come to an end, he cheerfully puts up with inconvenience by the way. And in view of heaven as the termination of our pilgrimage here, the cause for discontent is almost if not entirely removed. The wrongs here are not to last; the misunderstandings here are only incidents by the way, to be laughed at in the perfect knowledge of the coming life; the fact that here we do not get our desert, is only like sickness in taking a summer cruise, and is vastly outweighed by the anticipation of pleasure. Mere episodes of travel, present trial, wrong, and care, are only intended to show our good humour and gentleness of heart. They are only for a moment, the life to come will end them all.

In that life, justice will be done both to the weak and the strong; there, secret wrong will be exposed; there, suffering innocence will receive the fullest recognition; there will be no more tears or pain, and there the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. And if only as an antidote to repining, we cannot over-estimate the importance of belief in the world to come, or set too high a price upon the assurance, that "the righteous shall go away into life eternal."

Another great truth in relation to life beyond the grave is, that it is much more real than this life; that it is based fully on all man's faculties, —the loving heart, the clear intellect, and the active life; and in addition to this, it includes the idea, that the defects of birth, education, and environment here,—not the result of our own voluntary action,—will there be rectified. The contemplation of heaven in its purity, innocence, love, and peace, is an incentive to a heavenly life here. Understood,—not as a mere place, but as a state of mind associated with perfect

manliness and womanliness,—the contemplation of heaven becomes the reason for manliness on earth. The thought of beginning the life beyond, where manhood only counts, and where the tinsel of class privilege, and the prerogatives of wealth, and the pageantry of power, are all laid aside as stage properties, makes true life here all the sweeter, and the enjoyment of it all the better. 'No matter how richly endowed we are here, no man really gets his true colours, and no man ever gets a full sense of who and what he is, until his thoughts take flight into the infinite, the invisible, and the eternal. Creatures of time, and bearing upon ourselves the impress of nature, it matters not how richly we may be endowed, we still want a certain comprehension. There is a certain shallowness about us. We can, indeed, feel the atmosphere of men accustomed to ponder the themes of the eternal world. No great nature has ever lived through life and not felt that this world was insufficient for him. In short, the other life, viewed as the home of those who have done, and still are doing, the will of

God, gives volume, vastness, and meaning to the ways and courses of the present state of probation.'

Another primary idea in relation to heaven is, that each one takes his place there according to his reception of Divine Truth and the use he makes of it. This is the order of heaven, and on account of this the Lord Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you." By the wise consideration of heaven as thus constituted, we are taught obedience to truth here, and we have the strongest of all arguments for a life of use to-day. Taking its arrangement and character entirely from principles of use, the knowledge of "other-worldliness" teaches us the right employment of money, time, labour, talent, love, intelligence, and whatever else is committed to our trust in the present life. Take love as an example. As it appears among the birds, it is often very beautiful; but however beautiful it may be for a time, it passes away with the genial days of summer, and unhappily for us, this is too much the case with love in its usual acceptation amongst men:—one touch of

stormy weather and it is all gone. The reason is, because, like the love of doves and sparrows, it is only natural and earthly. Genuine human love—true in the storm as on the brightest day—rests securely in the reality of our faith in the world to come. But for heaven, our best affections bear the feebleness and the flaws of time. Peace and gentleness, and self-denial, and heroism in loving,—for self-interest can love when it brings personal gratification,—but heroism in loving, and the outpouring upon others of that love which is never weary and never grows old, these are the things that result from adopting principles of life that flourish in heaven. 'The power of love, its grandeur, the glory of its fidelity, the beauty of its life, its atmosphere, its horizon, and the vast and crystal dome of expectation that rises above it, are one and all dependent upon man's sense of the other life. The departure of those we truly love quickens the emotions of love. Many have spoken words of forgiveness over the grave, they were never willing to utter in the workshop or the home. When those we love are

gone, we think of our temper, our pride, our waywardness. We remember how little we availed ourselves of the golden hours of a noble confidence. We remember how little we strove for things Divine.' And it is only when we carefully study the fact, that brief life is here our portion, and if we are ever to meet in the yonder land,—the love that brings us together there, must be cultivated here, and the fountain of affection here must be kept sweet and pure. Every thought of love in heaven sends us back to amend our doings on earth.

What is true of love is equally true of sorrow and care; it is heaven only that tells us what they mean. Here, there is no lasting satisfaction. If we have no care of our own by right, some friend or enemy is quite sure to give us what we lack from his own private store. Sooner or later, sorrow comes to every soul. Social relationships give pain as well as pleasure. Things will go wrong sometimes, work as we will. Go where we may, sickness dogs our steps and wastes our strength. Plan as we may, the end sometimes

brings disappointment. And if we ask the economic philosopher of the present world, why this is, he has no answer to give. The interests of this life are never met, if this life is all. If death ends all, this life is the greatest farce that was ever played. And it is only in the light of heaven that sorrow finds its answer. This world is the true measure of nothing human. We are spiritual beings by inheritance; heaven is our God-appointed home, and our spiritual interests estimate and determine the value, both of what we suffer and enjoy. If prosperity induces a natural-mindedness, and hinders practical religion, then success is to us the greatest of all calamities. If on the other hand, sorrow, care, the faithlessness of friends, and the disappointments of life, weaken our hold upon animal gratifications, secular ambition, and selfish delights, and give us a desire for the study of sacred subjects, and keeping the commandments of God,—then to us they have been the greatest of all blessings. We are spiritual beings, and whatever helps spirituality is a lasting good.

It is precisely the same with money. Each one takes his place in heaven according to his use. In the light of heaven therefore, the end of money here, is use. But there is such a thing as "being made poor by abundance." Long after some men have secured enough for every rational enjoyment, they still forget everything but the hope of gain. Nor let us imagine that it is enough to bequeath money to charities with the dead hand, and to build alms-houses because we cannot take the gains of a lifetime with us. In the light of heaven, if a man has not been useful here, and could take his wealth with him, he would have no desire to use it there. Use there, makes use here imperative; and God's will is done in heaven because it has been done by men on earth.

The study of heaven, that is, "other-worldliness," is the study of all our duties and obligations here. Do you mean at some future time, to speak words to awake better hopes in the hearts of desponding men? Then begin to speak them now. Do you mean to be good

and kind in the after life? Then you must begin now to make your neighbourhood purer and sweeter, to straighten the things that are crooked, and to leave the way of life clearer than it is. Do you mean to join the throng of those who minister in the service of love? Then you must set on foot beneficent projects of art and culture, which shall work for humanity here and now. Do you wish to be happy in the life that is to be, and share the felicities of the angels? Then you must begin to do here as the angels do. "Never was there such an engine of torment as this world; never was there such a miserable thing as man; never was there so much needless pain, if there is no balm, no hope, no future." With heaven in view, the child we loved and lost will there be found; the home that was shattered will be reconstructed; the friends we knew will be restored; it is the land of recompense for all nobility of soul; it is the solace of the bereaved, the comfort and cheer of the aged, and the end of all the good.

"Other-worldliness" is the measure of our

wisdom here; and only as God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven, shall we join those of whom it was said, and "the righteous shall go away into life eternal."

II.

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF ANGELS.

THERE are few subjects open to human investigation, claiming a wider interest than the origin and nature of angels. In all ages and in all parts of the earth, mankind have entertained the most confident faith in the existence of a future world. F. Schlegel says of the Egyptians, "Among these nations of primitive antiquity, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was not a mere probable hypothesis; it was a lively certainty, like the feelings of one's own being." Existence in a future life, indeed, is an instinctive want; and according to the latest scientific information, "God," or as some scientists would say, "Nature has never yet implanted an instinct,

for the gratification of which she has failed to provide the means." And of all human instincts, the untaught need of immortality is one of the strongest.

But after mankind have settled the question of a future world, and formulated a belief beyond reasonable doubt, the details of life in that world still remained unsettled. It is always a misfortune to mankind, when any question of importance remains under debate generation after generation; but hurtful as this is, it is much worse when the idea gets abroad, that it is only a subject of vague speculation, and that we can really know nothing about it. Speaking of the life to come as regarded by ancient nations, Mr. W. R. Cooper uses these words, "The future of the body and the soul must always have been to their wisest philosophers what it even now is to the ablest scientists of the present day, an inscrutable mystery,—a mystery which inspiration has only partly revealed, and which faith and reason alike teach us to leave with confidence in the hands of the great all-wise, all-pitiful, and

all-good." * This, to say the least of it, is a remarkably short and easy way through every difficulty; but it is quite as unsatisfactory, as it is short and easy. The fact is, if there is a future world and we are to go there by compulsion, we have a right to know what that world is like, and who inhabit it. Besides this, it is not common sense to be commanded to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," if we know nothing of those who live there, of what they do, and of how they think and act. The word "mystery" is a road to nowhere. And in the New Church, we believe that as a doctrine, reverently but injuriously taught by theologians, and reverently but hurtfully entertained by the people, the method of settling religious difficulties by the plea of "mystery," is played out; we believe that the Christian world is wanting light, and that God through human instrumentality has given all the knowledge which can be reasonably required, in relation to the origin and nature of the angels.

* *Egyptian Belief in Modern Thought*, 37.

Another point to be borne in mind in discussing everything belonging to the future life is that it answers no good purpose to admit the existence of angels in general, and deny all knowledge of them in particular. This is one of the gravest of all mistakes in the religious world at the present moment. The existence of another world is clearly taught by all Christian communities; but strange to say, it is denied that we know anything of it in detail. The existence of angels is clearly advocated, but as to who they are, where they came from, what their nature is, how they live, and in what they differ from man, we are assured that we know nothing. In speaking of angels, the Rev. J. Gardner asserts, "Angels form the link of connection between God and this world." But when they were created, or where they came from, he confesses he does not know. His words are, "Moses makes no mention of such beings in his account of creation;" and "speculation on their origin is very unprofitable." His advice therefore is, to be content with believing that

they are ministering spirits, sent to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.

Dr. Smith, discussing the same subject in his *Dictionary of the Bible*, makes the statement, "By the word angels, we ordinarily understand a race of spiritual beings, of a nature exalted far above that of man." But where they came from *he* does not know; what their nature is he cannot tell; and yet with an audacity only equalled by the gravity of the imputation, he adds, "They are finite beings, and this finiteness of nature implies capacity of temptation, and accordingly we hear of fallen angels." He then admits, "Of the nature of their temptation and the circumstances of their fall, we know absolutely nothing."

As thus indicated, we have a statement of all that is popularly known of the original inhabitants of heaven. Practically it is a belief in general, with a flat denial of all knowledge in particular, and in point of fact, this means that we do not know anything at all. Here, for instance, is a botanist; he is our teacher, and he

assures us that he knows all about the nature of trees, flowers, and plants in general. With exogens and endogens in general he is perfectly at home. He tells us that he knows all their orders, and dilates with great eloquence and charm upon forest and mountain scenery. At first he gains our confidence, we receive his science in general with delight, and we think him very clever. But things in general are soon exhausted, and at last the test comes; we ask him various questions on particular trees; on the characteristics of individual flowers, and on the organic structure of some one plant. To each question he replies, he does not know; and he further asserts that no one else knows. And of trees, flowers, and plants, taken in detail, he has no information to give. But as every one admits, general knowledge comes from particular items of information, and of the man who claims to know all about the vegetable world in general, and is ignorant of every particular tree and flower, we do not hesitate to say, that as a botanist, he is only a shallow and vain pretender.

The same principle applies with equal force to the theologian. If the theologian assures us, that angels are an intermediate order of beings between God and man; that they are the native inhabitants of heaven; that in heaven some of them were tempted and fell, and became the first devils and tempters of the human race; and when we ask where these angels came from; how he knows they are a separate and distinct race from men; on what grounds they could be tempted in heaven, and what was the nature of their sin, and his reply to each question is, that of particulars he is absolutely ignorant; the only legitimate inference is, that as a theologian, he is precisely in the same position as the illusive and self-deceiving botanist, who knows all about trees and flowers in general, but can give you no information whatever on any one in particular.

Referring to the popular belief that angels fell from their holy state in heaven, and which in sober verity is no more and no less than the Gospel according to John Milton, I submit with all deference to those whom it may affect, that

such an extravagant idea is a piece of consummate presumption. If there is one place in the universe above another, which we believe is safe from the intrusion of evil, that one place is heaven; but if it is the place where angels fell, it is no better than our own earth, in fact not as good, because we can repent, but for them there is no redemption; and even should we win our way to a place among the angels, the sense of security must be for ever gone.

Distinguished from this old and untenable view, we in the New Church hold that heaven always was, as it is now, secure from the introduction of actual evil, and that in heaven the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; that once attained it is never lost; that it is the home of those who have chosen right and good as principles of life; that it will ever increase in felicity; and that we may look forward to the peace and rest of heaven, with perfect confidence, as eternally secure from the awful contingency of again falling into evil.

Turning to notice the supposed Scriptural

basis of the belief, that angels fell in heaven, it is quite true that the apostles Jude and Peter, Jude vi., and 2 Peter ii. 4, both speak of "the angels who kept not their first estate, but sinned, and were cast down to hell." But unfortunately for these two writers, their reference to fallen angels is now conclusively proved to be a quotation from the apocryphal book of "Enoch." This book of "Enoch" was very popular among the early Christians; and in speaking upon this subject, Professor Moses Stuart, whose opinions are strictly orthodox on other matters, affirms, that after a very careful and thorough examination of these passages, he does not hesitate to pronounce them quotations from the book of Enoch, and that therefore they are wholly destitute of Divine authority.* In the New Church, we therefore dismiss the doctrine of the fall of angels, not only as rationally untenable, but as unscriptural, and dependent entirely for support on the fertile imagination of the author of the book of Enoch.

* *The Apocal.* vol. i. 50–73.

Another point, generally overlooked, is, that according to the old view, it is not possible for men to become angels at all, because they were created different in point of race. We may aspire, but the angelic nature can never be attained; we may progress, but as a race created by itself, we must always stand outside their shining ranks. When, however, we appeal to reason and the Word of God for confirmation of this popular belief, we find no evidence whatever of this separate order of beings. Perhaps it will be said, but these mighty angels cannot be of our race, because they are furnished with wings, and the Bible is responsible for this belief. And I admit that there are several passages in the Word of God, in which angels are described with the addition of wings.—Rev. viii. 13; Rev. xiv. 6; and Isa. vi. 2.

But in these cases wings are symbols, intended to suggest the idea of freedom in angelic movements, and the ease with which our heavenly companions ascend and descend in their ministrations to man. The artistic angels on tombstones,

in sculpture, and other works of art, such as cherubs all head and wings, and mighty hosts of celestial beings plumed like eagles, are mere inventions, adopted by artists because they are striking and picturesque. Artists paint, not because their efforts can be verified by stern realities, but they paint to represent fancies, and very often their pictures are symbolic.

The dawn has been represented by art as the winged figure of a woman; strength and intelligence were represented by the Assyrians as a winged bull with a human head; and God was represented in Egypt by a winged globe. In our own Scriptures also, wings are ascribed to God, and David prays, "Hide me under the shadow of thy wing."—Ps. xvii. 8. In recording His mercies to the children of Israel, the Lord reminds them how He delivered them from Egypt, and He adds, "Ye have seen how I bare you on eagles' wings."—Ex. xix. 4. We also read of cherubim with wings, guarding the mercy-seat, Ex. xxv. 20; and seraphims with six wings, Isa. vi. 2; but it needs no argument

to prove that in all these instances wings are representative of freedom, protection, power, or velocity, as the case may be, and that if we attempt to take them in their bald, literal signification, we shall fall into the grossest error.

Angels possess no power, no gift, no attribute denied to man. In the New Church, we believe that man is made in the image and likeness of God. These two gifts are the highest forms receptive of Divine life;—there is, there can be nothing beyond them. As the image of God, man is wise in God's wisdom; as the likeness of God, man is animated by His Divine love. Other men may receive more of these than we upon earth; but all alike, in all worlds, are forms receptive of angelic attributes from one and the same source. No being possesses any power in, and of, and by himself. Whether amongst angels or men, all are stewards of talents committed to their charge; and though some angels excel others in strength, although there are different orders and different degrees of wisdom amongst the inhabitants of heaven,

yet there is no warrant in the Word of God for believing, that a distinct race of angels exists in heaven to whose goodness the spirits of just men made perfect cannot attain.

Passing on to consider the belief that angels were created a distinctly superior race to man, it is admitted even by its advocates, that the sacred Scriptures are absolutely silent, and give not one ray of light upon the subject. But though this is the case, yet it may still be maintained that passages are certainly to be met with in the Scriptures, which seem to *imply* that man is lower in the scale of being than the first inhabitants of heaven. In Psalm viii. 5, it is written, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels;" and in Hebrews ii. 7, it is again recorded, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels."

Looking at these texts as here given, it will be admitted by every candid mind, that on the authority of Holy Writ, the members of the human race are made lower than the angels. But when we turn to the Revised Version, we

discover that both passages have been mistranslated. Correctly rendered, and as given in this Version, the text in the 8th Psalm reads, "For Thou hast made him but little lower than God." The word angel is not used at all. In Hebrew it is Elohim, and in English, God. When Moses says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," the same word is used for God, as that which is used by the Psalmist. But when the old translation of our Bible under the patronage of King James was made, the belief that angels were created superior to man was the authoritative doctrine of the Church, and out of deference to the popular belief, and in order to save the creed of the Church, the translators of the passage in question left out the word "God" and put in the word "angels." How such an action should be characterised, each one can determine for himself; but this is quite clear, the declaration, that "man was created a little lower than the angels," is the invention of our Biblical translators, and is not the teaching of the Word of God.

The words in Heb. ii. 7, have been equally corrupted in their transition from Greek into English. In the Revised Version this passage reads, "Thou madest him *for a little while* lower than the angels." Man's inferiority is only for a little while. During his probation on earth, bearing the hereditary taints of evil, combatting sin, and passing through trial and temptation, man takes the place of subordination, not in point of race, but in degree of attainment only. And in accordance with this conclusion, when speaking of those who are worthy to obtain that world, the Lord Jesus says, "For they are equal unto the angels."—Luke xx. 36.

In contradistinction to this old theory, the doctrine held by the New Church, and resting firmly upon the evidence of the Word of God and enlightened reason, is, that angels were not a separate creation from the human race; that every inhabitant of the other world was once human like ourselves, grew as we grow, died as we shall die, and having put off the material body, passed into the life beyond, and there entered

upon the higher uses and delights reserved for the angels of God. In this view, everything angelic appeals to human hope and aspiration. The idea of angelic life acts beneficently upon our own character. The study of their ministrations sends us back to our own world, and by and through their example, we are shown the way to our immortal peace.

The evidence in support of this new view is both ample and varied. Take, for instance, the meaning of the word angel. It is the equivalent of our word messenger, and almost, if not uniformly throughout the New Testament, the word messenger in Greek is called angel, and might, or ought to be translated by the word angel in English. In the passages where it is said, angels ministered to the Lord, or appeared to men, the self same term is used in Greek, which in other passages is translated messenger.

The word angel is also used to represent the spirit of man. When Peter was liberated from prison, and presented himself at the gate where the church had gathered, it is narrated that Rhoda

opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in to tell the fact to the assembled Christians. At first they disbelieved her story, but when she persisted in its accuracy, not understanding how it could be Peter, they said it must "be his angel," meaning that it was Peter's spirit.

We also know something about the character, nature, and origin of angels from the frequent visits they have made to our earth. The Scriptures very often speak of angels as "men." These visitants to our earth were natives of heaven; they were also angels, and yet they were men; and they are described as men, because the word *man* represents the highest created being in the universe, whether on earth or in heaven. No angel can scale the proportions of manhood; he may leave us on earth immeasurably behind in intelligence and all spiritual attainments; but when the sacred writer delineates even the archangel Gabriel, *his* nature and ours are strictly identical, and he is called "the *man* Gabriel."—Dan. ix. 21. When three angels appeared to Abraham, they

are called men; when the two angels appeared to Lot, they are called men; the angel who wrestled with Jacob is called a man; when an angel appeared to Joshua at Jericho, he is also called a man; the angel who appeared to the wife of Manoah is called a man; and in several other places angels and men are words of equal import, and refer to the same order of beings. So fully is this borne out by the evidence of Scripture, that when the Apostle John fell down to worship the angel who showed him the wonders of heaven, the angel said, "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets; worship God." According to his own testimony, this instructor of the apostle had formerly been a prophet, lived on this earth, shared the sorrows of ordinary men, and by regeneration had finally become an angel of God. From the uniform testimony of the sacred Scriptures we must conclude, that angels are perfected men in human form, that they were once men on earth the same as ourselves, that they died in the ordinary course of

nature, and that being disrobed of their physical bodies, they passed as spiritual beings into the other world, and finally became angels.

For the belief that angels were a separate creation before the world began, we have no authority except tradition. But if tradition is to be trusted, mankind descended from the gods. If we rely upon tradition, we must indeed believe in all the dark-age superstitions, relegate all our scientific knowledge to oblivion, accept all the wild stories of past generations, and take the strange fancies of ignorance for hard, clear, rational, matter-of-fact reality. The truth is, all angels are regenerated and sanctified human beings. "They all began life in the material world. They were once helpless infants, and playful, and it may be wayward children. They were once where we are, clothed in a material body, spelling out the truth by letters and syllables; catching faint glimpses of it through clouds of sense, doubting, hoping, fearing, clinging to earthly good, weeping over its loss, exulting in its possession, struggling with evil, and misled by

errors. And as we overcome our evils, so they at last overcame theirs, and now they stand on the other side of life's ocean, and minister to the needs of all those who shall be heirs of salvation."

With regard to the nature of angels, our way has been made quite clear by the fact of their human origin. In the words of Young

> "Angels are men of a superior kind;
> Angels are men in lighter habit clad,
> High o'er celestial mountains winged in light.
> And men are angels loaded for an hour,
> Who wade this miry vale, and climb with pain
> And slippery step, the bottom of the steep."

In mind angels and men are the same, except in degree. Both enjoy the powers of thinking and willing; and both are formed to know wisdom and to enjoy the delights of love. Being men, angels have the same faculties as men; but with them, the obscurity of vision caused by the senses is removed, and the temptations which so often mislead our judgments are for ever overcome.

Like men, angels are in human form, and their beauty and perfection exactly correspond to the degree of their spiritual excellence.

Every angel that appeared to man was in the human form, this being the perfection of all forms, and the one in which the Lord Himself became our Exemplar, Redeemer, and Saviour.

But while angels are the same in form, they are different in substance. Our bodies are material; their bodies are immaterial; our bodies are composed of matter, theirs are composed of spirit. There are four kinds of substance. The first and highest is Divine; the second is spiritual; the third is natural; and the fourth is material. God only is Divine in substance; angels and the spirits of men are spiritual; and the physical bodies of men on earth, and all things by which they are surrounded in the world, are natural or material. At death, the spirit of man is disrobed of the material clothing, the real man is liberated from its earthly necessities, and becomes a being, human in form and spiritual in substance, the same as the angels.

In point of wisdom, the angels are no doubt greatly superior to men upon earth, at the same time the difference is one of degree, and not of

dissimilarity. Man has all the faculties of an angel, and in due time will come into the full fruition of his powers the same as the angels. His present hopes, longings, prayers, aspirations, and desires, are prophetic of his angelic future. The only difference between men and angels is due to development; the good man will progress throughout an endless future, and in the end, his powers of loving and thinking will reach the perfection of the angels. Similar in thought, similar in feeling, similar in form, similar in substance, and in the power of endless growth; —men are angels loaded for an hour, and angels are men in lighter habits clad. Having the same origin, we have the same destiny, and our home like theirs is the kingdom of God.

This new doctrine, that all angels are from the human race, is not only supported by the whole teaching of the Word of God; but it receives every confirmation from the analogies of nature and the declarations of science. No belief has been more completely shattered by science, than the notion that various orders of beings, and various

species in the world around us, came into existence by a separate and distinct creation. The order of all life is progress from lower to higher, from imperfect to perfect, and from simple to complex. Evolution is impressed upon every part of creation. Each step in life is a step upwards, and the human form dominates the whole. It is foreshadowed from the beginning, and when man came bearing the image of his maker, God gave being and form to his highest and noblest work.

But in his sensual state on earth he is still hopelessly imperfect. In him there are instinctive aspirations towards a life not yet attained. Revelation accordingly directs him to the life beyond the grave. For this life he was designed and spiritually endowed. To people heaven with angels was God's eternal purpose in creating man. Upwards and onwards to that end all have been moving from the beginning, as they chose to do the will of God, and all will so continue to move thitherward as the ages pass away. If we fail to join the celestial throng, it will be because we

refuse to keep the Divine commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—Matt. xix. 17. Angelic life is equally open to all. All angels were once men; and all men now are organized angels. The line of progress is appointed by our Maker. Of the same race as all celestial beings, their heaven is the final home of all the good, and "for a little while, only, are we made lower than the angels."

III.

WHAT KIND OF A PLACE IS HEAVEN.

NO subject connected with the future life is more deeply stained with pagan and mediæval superstitions than that of heaven as a place. As a place, there is hardly any locality in space which has not been fixed upon as the abode of the departed. Homer located Elysium "at the extremity of the earth." Virgil as a good Roman, pointed to Italy as the fittest country for so felicitous a spot. Plutarch was content to find his paradise in the centre of the earth; and Lucian assigned it a situation near the moon. Strange as it may seem, yet these pagan ideas coloured and partly shaped the ideas of the early Christians. They are also still amongst us, and

on the strength of these traditions, the Christian's hell is spoken of as down there below, or in the earth; while heaven is regarded as up there, beyond or among the stars.

By many minds, these superstitions are held in reverence, because it is believed that everything connected with heaven belongs to the shadowy realm of speculation. Against this, it must be admitted by every unbiassed reader, that while the Bible has given us no distinct lessons on heavenly geography, yet that it has furnished us with many fundamental truths, which are so clear in their teaching, that we cannot do otherwise than discard the semi-pagan notion, that heaven is situated somewhere in material space. So definite also are the truths given to us in the Word of God, relating to heaven, that we can no longer regard the phenomenal appearance of the future life as a subject of doubt or speculation.

The pagan, and indeed all other materialistic ideas of the life to come, are at once and entirely disposed of by the distinct teaching of the Lord Jesus. In our Lord's time the Jews were under the

impression that the kingdom of God would occupy a given locality on earth, like the land of Canaan; but when they enquired when it would appear, the reply was, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here: or, Lo there: for behold the kingdom of God is within you."—Luke xvii. 20, 21. This statement is so clear that it does not admit of two interpretations. It distinctly and definitely tells us, on Divine authority, that God's kingdom is first subjective, and then objective, or that it is first a *state* of mind within, and by implication, that it possesses a definite locality afterwards. The old, the familiar, and the popular idea is, that people *go* to heaven when they die, and that if they can only just manage to gain an entrance, the joy of the angels will burst upon them as an irresistible inspiration. This old conception of heaven is distinctively pagan; it presupposes some ready-made place of entertainment, and it is as unscriptural as it is unphilosophic. It is never the place, but the state that gives permanent happiness. Hence the force of the Lord's

words, "The kingdom of God is within you."

A legend of the Middle Ages tells us, that a certain monk, being excommunicated by the Pope for holding heretical opinions, was sent at death in charge of an angel to find a fit place of suffering in hell. But such was his gentleness, amiability of temper, and genial disposition, that wherever he went he was gladly received; and when even the most uncivil of spirits conversed with him, such was his kindness and tolerance, that instead of contradicting or tormenting him, they took his part; and even good angels from afar, came to see him and to take up their abode with him. The legend then says, the angel sent to find a place of torment for him, removed him to a worse place, but with no better success. For the good monk, hell had no terrors; in fact it had no existence, because he carried heaven in his own, happy state of mind. At last the escorting angel returned with his prisoner to them that sent him, stating that no fire could be found which

would burn him, and that delightful scenery sprung into being around him wherever he went.

Whatever was the original intention of this story, it is an apt and singularly beautiful illustration of the Lord's words, "The kingdom of God is within you."

Heaven is not only an object of hope, but in this light it becomes an incentive to personal holiness in the life that is. The heavenly *state* precedes the heavenly *place*, just as the root precedes the form, fragrance, and colour of the rose, or just as the cause in the gardener precedes the effect in the garden. In bad men a change of country, place, or habitation effects no permanent change of character, and leaves them just where it found them. I do not speak one word against the fine arts, against upholstery and cabinet work, against the achievements of science, and the tasteful and gorgeous surroundings of wealth, but by the testimony of overwhelming evidence, we know for certain that they cannot, and that they do not produce permanent

happiness. Burns said with the full concurrence of reason,

> "If happiness ha'e not her seat
> And centre in the breast,
> Ye may be wise, or rich or great,
> But never can be blest."

As a happy and concordant place resulting from a heavenly state of mind, the contemplation of the life to come reads us a daily lesson touching our own state of mind, both at home and abroad. In this new view of the spiritual world, there is nothing hazy, nothing vague, nothing speculative. Happiness, we know from personal experience, is not in the abundance of the things that man possesseth, but in contentment, a peaceful soul, in the consciousness of goodness, and in the delights of wisdom. To this state, the place called heaven succeeds, as surely as the snows melt, the sneaping winds depart, the black woods change to living green, the landscape brightens, the birds return, and all nature rejoices in the beauty of summer, because the sun has returned from his winter's travel. Given the state, and heaven follows as a corres-

ponding place, glorious beyond the wildest dreams of the sublimest fancy; and in support and confirmation of this new view of heaven, the words of the Lord Jesus are, "The kingdom of God is within you."

In striking contrast to the pagan view of the life to come, in which the *place* is supposed to produce happiness, the Christian world has also shared to some extent, the superstitions of the ascetic. Under the mistaken idea that God delighted in prayers, chants, meditation, vows of poverty, and a life of devotion in the cloister, better than manly toil, better than honest industry, better than home life, and better than working to leave the world happier than they found it, one section of mankind retired from society, and spent their lives in religious seclusion. This seclusion—hushed, quiet, contemplative, lost to the roar of the great struggling masses around, and devoted to a mechanical routine of matins, litanies, and vespers,—was first spoken of with sacerdotal awe, and at last passed into the popular mind as earth's highest preparation for,

and nearest possible approach to heaven. Personally, I should think that nothing could be farther from it; but still such has been the education of the saintly world, that even now this ascetic idea of heaven has not yet lost its hold upon the popular mind.

It has been supposed that harps and singing would form the chief attraction and felicity beyond the grave. Though religion in this world has never been made over attractive, or particularly festive, yet the joy of the other life has been usually pictured as a prolonged religious service: than which nothing could be more inapt. Others have dwelt most touchingly upon its rest; and if any writer or speaker has dared to suggest some sensible occupation for the sainted dead, his remark has far too often provoked sneering and hostile comment.

One thing is beyond controversy, and not even the hermit, or ascetic himself, regards austere retirement as a pleasure or an end in itself. The *miserere* seats in Cathedral choirs, invented to awake the choristers, should nature

dare to steal a moment's respite from the hated monotony of the midnight vigil, illustrate the case in point. The work of the ascetic was more fatiguing than useful toil, it taxed the powers to the utmost stretch, and was never regarded as a good in itself. To be happy, man must not only be employed, but his occupation must confer a blessing upon others Idleness—the utter and complete cessation from useful occupation—is equally foreign to the happiness of man, whether in a state of heavenly glory, or in his earthly probation. And like the Pagan, the Ascetic idea of eternal devotion is both unscriptural and unphilosophic.

Throughout our Bible, heaven, understood first as a state and then as a place, is pictured as a real world like our own, with mountains, trees water sparkling in the light, with landscapes, with objects familiar to every observer, with light, with sound, with fruits, and making demands upon the senses of taste, sight, and hearing, precisely the same as the world in which we now live. If we take the Scriptures as our authority

we must believe that heaven is within view of, and in contact with this earth. It may be that the idea is both new and startling, and yet having a due regard to biblical information, the only real wonder is, that it has ever been doubted. When for instance, the "heavens were opened" to Ezekiel, and he saw visions of God, including almost every object of art and culture open to inspection on our own planet, where did he see them? It was not because he had been conveyed into the empyrean, beyond the clouds and stars. As a matter of simple fact, the prophet was still an inhabitant of our earth, he had not changed his neighbourhood, he was a captive in a foreign land, and as given in Ezek. i. 3, the heavens were opened to him as he sat by the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans. Heaven, on Scripture authority, was in full view of Chaldea; and the same authority tells us, that with his spiritual eyes the prophet Ezekiel looked into it, and wrote down what he saw.

When again the Apostle John was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and a door was opened in

heaven through which he was permitted to pass and behold the magnificent scenery described throughout the book of Revelation, he too was a sorrowing exile in Patmos. Spiritually, he was in the midst of the noblest scenery ever painted by human language, and yet bodily he inhabited a common mud hut on the shores of the lonely sea. He had passed no whither, and continued all the time guarded by his keepers. Heaven was opened to him in Patmos, it was within view of his island home, in actual contact with the spot of earth he inhabited; and because his spiritual eyes were opened, he saw the glories of the eternal world. There was no new creation, heaven was there before his eyes were opened; it was there after they were closed; and like all the good, he was actually in it. But the darkness of nature was upon him and he knew it not.

The Bible indeed, is full of similar instances, showing us that heaven is literally round our earth. In 2 Kings vi. it is recorded that the Lord opened the eyes of Gehazi, and he saw the

mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. The prophet Zechariah was also permitted to look into heaven, and in it he beheld rivers, seas, mountains, and groves. The apostles were taken up a mountain, and with spiritual eyes they saw Moses and Elias in glory. With these details before us, heaven becomes as real as the globe beneath our feet. I have invented nothing, I have desired you to believe nothing without the evidence of the Word of God. That is our authority in the New Church; on its utterances we base whatever views we teach of the future world; and in the light of revelation we do not hesitate to affirm, that heaven is open both to intelligent study, and to rational comprehension.

If we require specific teaching on particular points, we believe that the Word of God affords us ample facts from which we may safely deduce the information required. If science demonstrates one thing more clearly than another, it is, that what was once a mystery, is not necessarily so always. Nature was the same before the

appearance of our modern students of the material world; but everything was enveloped in mystery. The anatomy of the human body was unknown; we did not know what lightning was; we did not know how the common house, or meat fly came into existence. Nature was a closed book; and though men of science are still confronted with problems which they cannot solve, yet the book of nature is now beginning to be understood, because it is being differently interpreted. Science now opens men's eyes, where before it closed them; it now says "Behold!" where in previous ages it made rough guesses, and then took refuge partly in invention, and partly behind the screen of mystery.

Thus it is with the Bible. The Word and the works of God are both alike, uttering new voices, merely because they are being more rationally studied. Man is free to think now, both as a student of nature and the Word of God, whereas in past ages he was ordered to believe by the dictation of the Church. Light has come for all, and if we will but clear our minds of dogmatism,

priestly authority, and superstition, it will be found that there are great fundamental truths given in the Word of God, by which, and through which, we may know for certain, and not as mere speculation, the nature and characteristics of the future life.

One of the popular ideas of heaven has hitherto been, that it presented one unvaried life on a common level, that all were equal, and that it was the same for all. But when we turn to the Bible for confirmation, we find no warrant for this belief. On the contrary, the world to come is represented as a place of broad distinctions, varied characteristics, and manifold arrangements, but always presided over and directed by unity of purpose. In speaking of those who have gone hence, the Apostle Paul says, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead."—1 Cor. xv. 41. In this description, the basis of life in heaven is precisely the same as the basis of life

upon earth, and the diversity of environment and character there is set forth by the variety discovered in the objects and uses of physical nature. In this world, the greater the variety of taste and talent amongst men, and the greater the diversity in the products of nature, the greater become the possibilities of service and use. To this variety the great Apostle appeals, in order to illustrate the character of life in the world to come, and with scant courtsey he dismisses heavenly uniformity as a dreary nightmare, wholly confined to the night of error.

Regarded as a place, the world to come is modelled on the appearances of nature around us. Viewed never so critically, the scenery of our earth is exceedingly beautiful. "This world," said one writer, "might have been made by three gods, the first one a poet, the second a painter, and the third a sculptor." It appeals to every capacity, and it offers delight, not less to the budding faculties of the child, than to the matured intelligence of the philosopher. No one is uncared for, every appetite is studied, every sense

meets with ample satisfaction,—eye, ear, taste, touch,—all are provided with the means of gratification. If we study the wants of the nobler faculties, the demands of culture, æstheticism, fastidious taste, high art, or poetic sentiment, nature is a host that amply provides for every guest. But we are assured on no less an authority than the Bible, that this world in all its beauty and use is the reflection and image of God's creative power and government in all worlds—visible and invisible,—and in enforcing this truth upon the Romans, the Apostle Paul uttered the words, "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."—Rom. i. 20.

The idea of the Apostle Paul, that heaven is a perfected facsimile of the beautiful work of God as exhibited in the world of nature around us, is repeated in every part of Scripture, and as if to leave us without even a shadow of uncertainty on the subject, the Lord Jesus pictured it as a more real and a more beautiful world than our own,

and gave the comforting assurance to his dying companion, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."—Luke xxiii. 43. As all the angels are perfected human beings, such a paradise is not only the need of angelic happiness, but it is the sure promise of the Word of God.

What a paradise is, every one fully understands. It is the sum of earthly loveliness. Among the Greeks it meant a park, pleasure-ground, or garden. It includes all beautiful scenery both wild and cultivated. We may take the finest prospect on earth, pastoral or mountainous; it may be sea-girt, or sloping to the banks of an inland lake or limpid stream, and it will then only represent one little spot in the wide domains of heaven. We may travel to foreign lands and stand enraptured beneath palm groves, we may wander through gardens perfumed with every flower, and reach our hands to gather pouting fruits gratifying alike to eye and taste, or we may stand in the forest where the shadows deepen into twilight, where the moss is always soft and green, and mighty rivers have

their birth, and if the better land is a Paradise, then all these will be there, perfect in richness, fulness, and picturesque loveliness.

But, while heaven as a Paradise surpasses all description, yet even as a place of matchless grandeur, it will not appear alike to all. We shall see there, only what we take eyes to see with. Heaven, even in its scenery, is first within, and afterwards without. There is no Paradise hereafter for the vacant soul. "The kingdom of God is within you." According to this, if the mind is not a Paradise, we shall look in vain for the garden of the skies. As God's kingdom is within us, it follows in the orderly sequence of cause and effect, that the scenery of the future world is not fixed and dead like the scenery of this planet, but living, and dependent on the state of the angels. The chief difference between a heavenly and an earthly paradise is, that the one is spiritual and in perfect correspondence with the spiritual character of the angels; whereas the beautiful scenery of our earth is material, and though

in agreement with the material bodies which all mankind possess, yet it is not the precise analogue of our inmost character. This world's noblest scenery always leaves us unsatisfied; it is either redundant or insufficient. It was made for us, not by us; it was here before we came, it will be here when we are gone. There is something in it to which we offer no response, and with which we are not at peace.

But in heaven it is not so; being a home of perfect happiness it rests squarely upon man's whole nature, and gratifies every want and longing of the human soul, in a manner and to a degree unknown to us in the present life. Moses and Isaiah will be there; the poets and singers of Greece and Rome will be there; the greatest of all sculptors and painters will be there; the great masters in music and literature will be there, and if that world is to be happier than this, it must of necessity provide them with more ample gratification. Luther and Galileo, the heroes and martyrs of science and religion will be there; Darwin and Livingstone, and all

the great pioneers and travellers whose names are written in the Book of Life will be there; Newton and Kepler, Copernicus and la Place, whose delight and service were to watch the midnight sky, and having seen the wonders of God's creative power, and having lost themselves in the wisdom displayed through the movements of suns and planets, to come back and tell us that they were only as little children, gathering shells on the shores of a boundless ocean,—these men will also be there.

What they have loved here, they will continue to love in its spiritual and corresponding form in the other life; and if that world is to be happier than this, then its sources of happiness will have to be much more varied than they have been in the present life. Having found some little delight here from the constitution of this natural world, the good of all climes and ages pass into the spiritual world, there to complete their felicity. The change of world is a change from the material to the spiritual; the spiritual world is the real and substantial, the material is only

the imperfect type and shadow. It is far too beautiful to be represented completely in human language; but is made to appeal to all that is best known and loved on our material planet. In speaking of it, the Lord Jesus gathered up as far as might be, the beauty of the present world, and in imagery with which we are the most familiar, and with which we are the most delighted, He presented to us the future and the better world, as the Paradise of God.

If the view here given should happen to be new, do not discard it on that account. Think about it; weigh its claims by the demands and necessities of your own nature. Free your minds, if they are not free, from the fear of thinking for yourselves. Dare to reason about religious subjects as you would reason on matters of business and the interests of life on earth. Be true to yourselves, and whatever conclusions you at last form, dare to stand by them, taking for your motto the utterance of the old philosopher, "The truth against the

world." It will be a step you will never regret, and at last it will bring you to that promised home of perfected good, of which it has been written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."—1 Cor. ii. 9.

IV.

WHAT ANGELS DO IN HEAVEN.

"WHAT angels do in heaven," is a subject so vast, and it embraces so many side issues, that it literally weighs down and oppresses the imagination. Something of its immeasurable scope may be gathered from the occupations of men upon this little planet. The population of this earth is only as one to myriads in comparison with the population of the world beyond the grave. It would take not minutes, but hours, to read the bare titles of human uses in the present life. But it would take a whole library to explain how, and by what means all the complicated and various services among men are carried out in detail. If a visitor from one of the distant earths were to alight on our globe for the purpose of giving a full account of what we do, how we

live, and the manner in which we employ our time, so colossal would be his task that he would never return were he to stay until his task was done. The story is told of a distinguished foreigner who visited England. After he had been here a week, he announced his intention of writing an exhaustive book on the English people. Weeks passed into months, and months glided into years, but the book remained untouched, and when the question was put, Why is it that the work is so long delayed? the reply was, "I am not yet master of my subject." The same answer was given as the years passed away, and the exhaustive treatise on the English people was never written. But if a detailed account of the doings of mankind on our earth exceeds the grasp of any single mind—as it does,—what shall we say of that future world into which the inhabitants of this world have been passing, probably for hundreds of thousands of years? The fact is, if an exhaustive account of what the angels do could be transmitted from heaven to us on earth, it would

fill so many volumes that it would never be read.

The years that the great Master spent upon earth were comparatively few; and yet in speaking of it the Apostle John says, "There are also many other things which He did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."—John xxi. 25. But little as we know of what Christ did, yet enough is known to serve mankind in the study, and meditation of perfect human life for all coming time. To have written many voluminous works, would not and could not have added to our real knowledge. His principles were few, but they took in and covered the whole compass and all the possibilities of human life. They are so few, they can be carried in the memory; they are so great, there is not a single detail of life however trivial and secret, or however public and comprehensive, which they cannot order aright, establish on the sure decrees of justice, purify from evil, and consecrate to the wisdom of the highest.

The principles of angelic life are also equally few, but their details are illimitable, and "even the world itself could not contain the books that might be written" upon them. The principles by which the angels live are precisely the same in heaven as for men on earth,—they are neither fewer nor more. Christ is the King of heaven, not less than the King of men. His gospel of love to God and love to the neighbour is as much the supreme law in heaven, as it should be with us in the present life.

Indeed the Word of God is as much needed by the angels as by us; that Word is as much the source of wisdom to the angels as to us; they have to live by it, as we do; they go to it for counsel, as we do; they are directed in their activities by it, just as we are. The laws of love to God and the neighbour find in heaven their perfect illustration; on the two great commandments, hang all the law and the prophets; and because of this it is written in Ps. cxix. 89, "For ever, O Lord, thy Word is settled in heaven." By this Word, the life of the angels,—

what they do, and what they must do if they obey its precepts,—is open to rational investigation and the study of all mankind; and in the light of these facts, our prayer day by day is intelligently made, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Taking the Word of God as the basis of angelic life, it follows that we know as much about the doings of the angels, as we know of the principle of supreme and disinterested love. What perfected love will do, such will the angels do. What does love try to do here? What is its purpose at home?—by the cradle? among the poor? between friends? What is the aim of love through philanthropy, and through benevolent and humanitarian movements? What does love try to do among men in business, between the estranged, and amongst the antagonistic circles in society? Wherever it appears it is the basis of peace, unity, and harmonious relations among men. In one word, it is the basis of Divine order.

In nature, order comes forth in cosmos, in

beauty, symmetry, and every variety of form that pleases the eye and delights the imagination. In a perfect rose, no petal is out of place; it was woven of the finest material; each little jet of colour went to its appointed spot, and each atom of matter filled its appointed mission. Because of this perfect submission of each several part to the beauty and grace of the whole, we get not only perfect order, but the result of it in the most lovely flower that blooms. Wherever we see beauty in nature it is the result of the Divine order, and it is nature's expression of the Divine love.

Order is the first law of heaven, and it is so because love is its central and all-pervading principle of life. On this principle we know as exactly what the angels do, as we know what love ordains for us on earth. It is not a matter of speculation at all, but on our knowledge of how love does and must act, we say with absolute certainty, that the life of heaven is devoted to making others happy. The light of heaven is Divine truth, the heat of heaven is Divine love,

and all who inhabit that better world are their receptive forms, and they are happy, only as they receive them into their minds and carry them out in a life of service to the neighbour. The first requisite of angelhood is not creed, not faith alone, not membership in a certain sect, but love to God and love to the neighbour. As the Apostle John says, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; for God is love."—1 John iv. 7, 8.

From this centre, order in heaven proceeds in every detail to the extreme circumference. Every one is in his place; each part is subordinated to the whole; each is free and in the delight of love, and each is therefore perfectly happy. Probably every one has seen a small crowd of trained children execute what is called the "Maypole dance." To a lofty column, bright and many-coloured streamers are attached. To each child is given one. Step by step as the mass moves round the centre, a graceful pattern is woven on the pole. The colours, without seeming order, blend into different designs, and when the

figure is complete, all the children cling or kneel together, each one having contributed a share in producing the pleasing effect. This over, the streamers are again untwined until they are outstretched to the farthest circumference of the circle, and a new movement and a new design are commenced. But no matter where each one may be, so long as it radiates in its proper place round the centre, the movement terminates in a beautiful design.

Thus it is with order in the activities and uses of the angels. Around love as the point of attraction all angelic life unfolds. Each angelic affection starts from the same source, and whether it extends to the farthest bounds of heaven, or rests in the effulgence of its central light, there is only one result. Each angel is in his place, each is doing his Master's will, and each is following a distinct order, whose sole object is the peace and happiness of all.

Radiating from love, all its activities naturally fall into graceful forms of use; not one, either is or can be overlooked, else the pattern would be

marred; the tangled web of life is there woven with perfect skill; each angel is attracted to the service in which his genius finds its supreme gratification, and the promise of the Lord Jesus is fulfilled when He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: and I go to prepare a place for you."—John xiv. 2.

But against the activities of the angels it will perhaps be urged that heaven is the place

> "Where congregations ne'er break up,
> And Sabbaths never end."

Some have supposed that heaven is a place of spontaneous and irresistible joys. "Some have believed that the angels would sit upon thrones, and that their happiness would spring from regal authority. Others, that they would feast with patriarchs and prophets, and that this would prove the basis of unutterable bliss. Others, that they would dwell in a city with gates of pearl and streets of gold." Indeed, the area of the New Jerusalem has been accurately measured. We have been seriously told, that it is 1500 miles square, and it has been carefully calculated how

many saints could comfortably stand within its sacred walls. "Others again, have believed that heaven would be a complete release from all active employment, and that happiness would be found in idle indulgence, without rendering the slightest service. While others have still further supposed that prayer, praise, and thanksgiving before the throne of God would be the chief employment of the angel hosts." Having heard these beliefs gravely stated, it is our duty to answer them, not with levity, as too absurd for serious consideration, but with all deference to those who hold them. It is also to be admitted, that the Bible itself, in its literal meaning, is responsible for some of these views.

In the first place, it is written in Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Taken literally, this text has seemed to imply, that in heaven the period of work would be over, and that saintly felicity would be an eternal season of leisure. It is very unfortunate

that, in the old translation of our Bible, the translators incorporated the traditional theology of their own times. Work, up to within a few years ago, was regarded as God's curse upon mankind for disobedience. This belief is breaking down now through the light and spread of scientific knowledge; but in 1611, when the old version was first published, the belief in work as a curse upon sin met with universal acceptance. Heaven was looked upon as a happy release, and those who attained its happiness were supposed to rest from their labours. In these days also labour is so unfairly distributed, it is associated with so much that is hateful, and it is so often taken without just payment, that it is still regarded with detestation; and in contemplating the life to come, there is little to wonder at that the toiling millions look forward to the cessation of that from which, in the present life, they have suffered so much wrong.

As work is thus understood, we are able to say with absolute certainty, that in heaven it is unknown. But there is work, and work. There

is work as an enforced task, and there is work in which a man finds his happiness:—work which he does because he loves it, which gives him delight, which he turns to in his leisure moments, and which he does, not for money, not in obedience to the dictates of a master, and not because he has signed a contract; but because in it, he finds his supreme pleasure and highest gratification. And even in heaven, if it is to be a happy place, there must be work as thus understood.

In the Revised Version of the Scriptures, many, if not all the old props on which popular beliefs rested, have been unceremoniously removed. In this version, the passage from the book of Revelation reads, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them." It is labour only that ceases. Labour is slave work; it is done for the reward; it is done as the children of Israel made bricks in Egypt, under a task master, and for our solace and comfort it is therefore written

"They rest from their labours." But of work as the source of our pleasure and highest gratification, there is, there can be no cessation by the nature and constitution of the human mind. In this world, no good man ever was or ever will be idle, except by compulsion. The idle from choice, are vicious without exception; they live upon others, and they live for themselves. Man or woman, queen or peasant, it is all the same, work is the only title to heaven. The declaration of the Lord Jesus therefore is, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."—Rev. xxii. 12.

Work throughout the Word of God is made the test of final worth. In the parable of the two sons, the one who said to his father, "I will not go, but repented and went, was the one who did his father's will." In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, none received the penny, but those who had been at work. Those who went in from the motive of reward and bore the heat and burden of the day, received no more

than those who went in at the eleventh hour, without bargain or hope of wages, and stood idle, only because no man sought their high and disinterested work. And in the parable of the pounds, the reward was given, only to those who had used, and doubled by judicious care, the amount entrusted to their charge. But if heaven is to be a place where the best have the least to do, then it follows as a fair inference, that he who hid his talent in a napkin, and followed the bent of his own inclination, instead of putting it out to usury, ought to have been regarded as the one best fitted to share the rest of heaven. Faith is a noble ally; but it is faith at work that God approves. And of those only who had used their Lord's money was it said, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But if we seriously take any one of the supposed methods by which the angels are believed to be kept in a state of repose, we shall discover on investigation, that it amounts to what we understand in this world, as a "regular occupa-

tion." Take for example, the belief that the blessed will sit upon thrones, and enjoy the gratification of regal pomp for ever; and however innocently such an idea may have been originally started, yet the simple fact is, even the solemn dignity of enthroned royalty, if it is to be continued, immediately becomes a "regular occupation." For an hour, I can quite understand, that the novelty of sitting in regal pomp might make it agreeable; for a day it might be endured with patience; in a week it would pall upon the taste of the most devoted royalist; in a month it would become intolerable; and after that it would be no better than penal servitude. Take again the mere splendour of a place as represented by gates of pearl, and streets of gold; or take eating and drinking with the patriarchs and prophets; or take playing upon harps and singing songs of thanksgiving: convert them into "regular occupations," to be repeated in their humdrum monotony to eternity, and from which there is no escape, and it is not possible to conceive anything more truly awful.

All these theories are refuted every day that we live; their contemplation makes us shudder; and happily for us, they are neither supported by Scripture nor enlightened reason. Perfected human beings, who have toiled up the ladder Jacob saw, the angels need a life much larger than our own; more perfect than we are, they do the will of God more perfectly than men wrapped in the dust-stained garments of nature, and because of this, and because we know that it is so, our prayer therefore is, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

If the demand be made, "But we wish to know definitely, on Scripture authority some few of the things that the angels do," my reply is, "The information is quite ready to hand." This part of the subject naturally divides itself into two sections: the first relates to what the angels do amongst themselves; and the second relates to what they do for us. Among themselves, there is quite as much to engage the activities of the angels, as among good men upon earth. One fifth of the human race die and pass into the

other world while they are infants. In that world they are as helpless as they would have been in this, and in that world they need the love, and care, and attention by which they would have grown in the present life. As the old Latin proverb tells us, "A house without youth, is like a day without the sun." Children are the joy as well as the care of every home, and in the other world, not less than this, their fresh, young life is a constant source of delight both to maternal and paternal love.

Children in the other life are not to remain children there, any more than here; but they are to grow into men and women angels. To that end they are instructed in angelic wisdom. Sorrow over the empty cradle here, finds its full comfort in the contemplation of child-life beyond the green pathway of the grave. All children belong to God; they were never our own. They were born in order to people heaven. If they had stayed here, they would have been God's all the same; and they were taken from us in their guileless innocence, out of the fulness of the

Father's love. Sad to part with, yet it is joyous to follow them in fancy, where "their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 10. Much as we may love them, we cannot love them as the angels do; carefully as we may have trained them, yet the training there will be much easier and pleasanter than it could have been here, and the results will be much more blessed and certain.

Here child training, is not always a pleasant occupation. The woes of the teacher on earth have often been told, and his services are seldom estimated at their worth. Very often indeed, if the teacher here, looked forward to the continuation of his occupation in the life to come, for him the idea of heaven would perish. But in the future world, the care of the little ones is not enforced by hard necessity, or because nothing better is offered, or because it is a lady-like or gentlemanly occupation. The angel guardians of all children, whether here, or in the life to come, are the wisest, noblest, and most perfect of all who people the wide heavens.

They are, indeed, so supreme in all motherly and fatherly graces, that they always behold the face of their Father who is in heaven. Taken into their loving charge because of their fitness, and finding in what they do for them their heavenly delight, all the children that leave us, are adopted by the angels,—and surely no fitter service for the great and good falls within the range of human consciousness. And in contemplating the wants of babyhood as it leaves us for the life to come, we are surely taught what one vast host of the angels do.

The angels also minister to those whose lot in this life has been less favoured than their own. About four-fifths of the whole human race are still pagans and unacquainted with Christianity. But they are not condemned for what they never knew; they are loved of God as much as we are; and in the other life they receive instruction in relation to the one God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and if they have been faithful to the little light they had here, they will finally become angels in heaven. In confirmation of

this great truth, the Lord Jesus in speaking to the Jews said, "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."—Luke xiii. 29. And in the instruction of those not yet christianized, we have indicated another vast field of angelic use.

There will also be worship and music in heaven. But neither prayer and praise, nor devotion and song are ends in themselves. God never desired our hymns, our instrumental music, or our worship, for the good they do to Him. God desires them on our own behalf, and because they are the means of "opening our souls to the influx of His love and wisdom, and of helping us to obey more easily and implicitly the precepts which require us to love and do good to our neighbour." Thus it is with the angels. Music is one of the delightful occupations of the angels just the same as it is with us on earth; but it is not the only one. It is only a means to a further end. If music is only a passing pleasure, if it only gratifies taste, if it only pleases an imagina-

tive fancy, and only steals over the soul as a delightful langour, then music is no better than a dose of opium. Its Divine purpose is to wake the genius, mend the heart, and fit those who listen to it for the service of life. It is a Divine symbol, a Divine allegory, a Divine parable, and its design is to inspire the harmony of minds perfectly attuned to principles of peace. As a means to this end, music occupies the talents of the angels. It is one essential part of worship; it strengthens their religion and renews their hearts; and with us, and for the same object, "They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways Thou King of saints."—Rev. xv. 3.

There are also the evil in the future world to be taken care of, not one whit less than here. This may be a new idea in relation to angelic life, and it may perhaps cause some little surprise; and yet when we come to think of it in the light of the gospels, it is no more possible

for Elizabeth Fry and John Howard, and the multitudes who have followed their example, to forget or disregard the claims of the wicked there, than they forgot or ignored them here. One of the six Christian services is, "I was in prison and ye came unto me."—Matt. xxv. 36. The old idea of taking pleasure in the sufferings of the wicked, is happily gone for ever. The spirit of humanity has taken its place; and now we are beginning to see that God punishes, not for revenge or for the sake of punishment, but for the sake of reformation. For the philanthropist there is, by all account, plenty of room and plenty to do in the world to come. The wicked are no more forsaken beyond the grave than they are here. In speaking of the Divine presence, the Psalmist says, "If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there."—Ps. cxxxix. 8. And let us be sure, that if the mercy of the Highest leads Him there, the angels cannot be absent; their work is to follow the Master and do His will.

Last of all, the angels are the guardians of the

human race. From our race on earth they were taken, and over it they keep perpetual watch. Our joy is their joy; and here is an occupation open to all.

Our Bible is full of instances illustrating the great truth, that "they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."—Heb. i. 14. When Hagar was driven away from the tent of Abraham, an angel saved her from despair, and her child from death. When Sodom had been doomed, Lot was warned by two angels to flee for his life. When Abraham sent his servant to fetch a wife for his son Isaac, his parting words were, "The Lord God shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son." When Jacob blessed his grandsons—Manasseh and Ephraim—his words were, "The angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." It was by the ministry of angels that the Lord led the children of Israel from Egypt to the land of Canaan: said He, "Behold I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in all the way, and to bring thee into the

place which I have prepared."—Ex. xxiii. 20. This guidance, by the agency of angelic ministration, is promised by the Lord again and again. And to prophets, priests, heroes, and warriors, angels were frequent and able counsellors.

Nor was this agency restricted to Old Testament times. Angels announced the births of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus; they instructed Joseph with respect to Mary his wife, and the enemies of the child Jesus; they ministered to the Saviour in the wilderness; watched over His tomb; rescued Peter and John from prison; directed Philip the deacon to the Ethiopian eunuch, guided Cornelius the centurian to Peter; and bade Paul fear nothing in the shipwreck which occurred to him on his way to Rome. While the whole of the Revelation by John from end to end, is built upon the idea of angelic ministration. And as if to remove all doubt about the interest angels ever take in us, the Lord Jesus said, "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over

one sinner that repenteth."—Luke xv. 10. Being those of our kindred, who have finished their work here and gone home, our nearest and dearest relatives, our best friends and truest lovers, they are more human even than they were here, they know us better, and love us more tenderly than when with us on earth, and while they wait for us to join them in their higher felicities, they are ever infusing into our minds the thoughts and feelings which shall help us in our journey through life.

In childhood they protect us from danger and harm, so far as they are able. They form as it were an atmosphere, which the infant soul constantly inhales; and with the gentlest influences, they quicken and unfold the germs of affections and thoughts, as blossoms unfold in the sunshine of spring. With perfect skill, they open fountains in the soul for the soft inflowing harmonies of heaven, that our life may be in accord with the Divine life, and receive its tone and colour from the sphere and light of heaven. As we grow in years and our evils begin to show

themselves, those angels are still with us, who are best adapted to supply the guidance of our individual life, who have the most power to control us for good, the most wisdom to guide us, and the most skill in touching the secret springs of influence to restrain us from evil, and to lead us into freedom and goodness.

In after years, when the habits of life have settled upon us, and we have grown indifferent to our better nature, angels still attend upon us to soften the hardness of our hearts, to invigorate our spirits with new and heavenly sympathies, and to distil over us a fresh life as the dews of heaven come to the flowers after the heat of the day. All through our years, indeed, angels are ever with us, asleep and awake, in trouble and sorrow, in care and weariness, in our labours and speculations, and in our forgetfulness of duty, not less than in our moments of spiritual devotion. As mind influences mind amongst men; as some men can control, lead, and direct others almost at will by the simple power of their moral character, so the angels exercise

their influence over us. Understanding us better than we even understand ourselves, they know how best to lead us. In evil, they try to restrain us, and in our duties they aim to bear up our spirits, to cheer us onwards, and to make duty a delight. In our darkness they seek to go before us, in our moments of trial and temptation they speak to the conscience in the still small voice; in sorrow they breathe a new life into our desolate souls, develop and strengthen every germ of goodness, and add new light to every true principle; and in many other ways altogether hidden from our cognizance, the promise of the Lord is fulfilled towards us, "That angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Whether the ideas thus expressed are new or old, one thing is quite certain, we return from our contemplation of what the angels do, furnished with new reasons for keeping the command, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."—Eccles. ix. 10. In the services of the after world, we are made to

understand the dignity and importance of all useful labour in this. In this survey of heaven, we feel with Carlyle, "The modern majesty consists in work. What a man can do is his greatest ornament, and he always consults his dignity by doing it." And with old Thomas Fuller we are led to say, "When thy hand hath done a good act, ask thy heart whether it was well done." In this heavenly light, the useless members of society are shown their danger; the yearning amongst men for independence, a competence, and retirement, receives a wholesome check; all true workers who toil with head, or hand, or heart, are assured that they have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from them, that for them, even as for those who wrought of old, the Master's "Well done," will at last be heard, and that on the hither side, the promise will be fulfilled, "They rest from their labours; for their works follow with them."

V.

MARRIAGE AND SOCIAL LIFE IN HEAVEN.

IN speaking of the future life to Dr. Johnson, a lady once said, "But might we not suppose, dear doctor?" In his usual dogmatic style the great man replied, "Madam, we may suppose everything, but we know nothing." So spake Dr. Johnson 140 years ago. Many have held the same opinion both before and since his day. But we have lived long enough to learn that discerning as the doctor was, yet that he did not know everything, and that if he had been silent on several occasions, his reputation for wisdom would have been proportionately increased. Another writer in speaking upon a kindred subject makes Horatio say:

"O day and night, but this is wondrous strange."

to which Hamlet replies :

> "And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

Year after year and age after age, mankind have been slowly adopting this higher wisdom of Shakspeare, as the basis of study and the search for further knowledge.

Happily for us, we are living at a time when the dogmatic denials of our forefathers in relation both to religious and scientific knowledge, can no longer be maintained,—except by people who refuse to be taught. And though in these days, new ideas are by no means offered the welcome they deserve, yet we may say with perfect truth, that we are much more open to receive instruction than any of our ancestors. Martin Korky, a pupil of the astronomer Kepler, denied in the face of proof, that the planet Jupiter had four satellites. "The earth," said Martin, "has but one ; why should Jupiter have four? I will never concede his four planets to that Italian from Padua."

Martin remained obstinate for some time; at last he was brought into a state of mind in which he was willing to be instructed by another, and take evidence as the ground of his belief. And in writing to Galileo, Kepler says, "I have taken him again into favour, upon this express condition to which he has agreed, that I am to show him Jupiter's Satellites, and he is to see them, and own that they are there." This too is the state of mind into which all must come, who desire to be instructed on the nature and characteristics of the future life. We must not only be willing "to crush a budding error, but we should be just as ready to help to raise a struggling truth. We are not to contradict an assertion because it is strange, but rather as a stranger give it welcome." We are never to prejudge. As Solomon says, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."—Prov. xviii. 13. Strange as it may seem, yet in the New Church we believe that the future life can be as clearly indicated as the Satellites of Jupiter. When it is spiritually interpreted, we hold that the Word of

God gives all the information, even the most careful thinker can require. And with the Apostle Paul we say, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 Cor. v. 1.

Passing on to notice the subject of marriage and social life in heaven, let us first ask the questions, what is social life, and what are the essential elements on which it rests and by which it is maintained? As we generally understand the word "Society," it means the persons, be they few or many, who recognise each other as associates, friends, and acquaintances, and who give and receive benefits from each other. And by "Social Life," we understand generally, all the companionable, friendly, dutiful, and happy relations in which the members forming the society stand towards each other.

Everything in this world is for the sake of supplying our social wants. "The largest portion of the happiness experienced among men on earth is derived from social conditions. The relations

of parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, friends and friends, and of neighbours where there is good will, are the source of our highest happiness. Their history is not of much account, and there are many things much more conspicuous; but if we take the trouble to look into human life, and see where throughout the years, the beds of satisfaction are most filled with flowers bright and fragrant, we shall find that it is in these social relationships." We shall find still further, that just in proportion as we refine and purify social relationships, in that proportion happiness increases. "A person is not refined simply because he has a taste for, or a discernment of the beautiful. True refinement implies spiritual conditions, affection one towards another, earnest sympathy, a sense of collateral being, and of the beautiful in relationship." And if anything with which we are acquainted in this world can be affirmed of heaven, it is the happy and perfect social relationships of the angels.

Where in point of refinement, regeneration, sympathy, and affection, we leave off on earth,

the angels commence in heaven. Taken from our race, they are human as we are; they are of necessity social as we are; for man is a social being, not by habit but by nature. He was created to enjoy the companionship of his neighbours, and he cannot be happy without it. This we know for certain is the nature of man here, and we further know that death neither destroys the individuality, nor the faculties of the mind. On the contrary, to good men it is one step towards the perfection of being. What was unreal only, is taken away by death, while all our genuine manhood remains. Not a faculty is lost, not a chord of affection is broken, not a single power passes from the soul. Nothing has been destroyed in passing through the golden gates. Each holy affection has been gathered up in the soul's sanctuary, not a single whisper has passed from moral consciousness, each ripple of beautiful thought has left its impress on the sands of the mind, and the gentlest impulses of love have left their undying witness in the heart, to find new and higher delights beyond the grave.

And in full assurance of this teaching, we read in Ps. xvi. 11, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

If we investigate the conditions upon which society in its best sense rests, we shall discover on the authority of the Bible, that in the future world, none of these conditions are missing. The first essential of all association is the possession of a human organization. The enjoyment of the present life rests wholly upon our sensibilities as men and women. The body is not only a medium of sense, but it is also a medium of the understanding and will, of the soul, of the mind, and of all the sympathies and emotions. As beings living in a material world, one requirement of social and all other enjoyment, is the possession of a body that responds to the provisions made for enjoyment on the physical plane.

This is also the first condition of enjoyment in the life to come. Without an organization, fitted for enjoyment we can affirm nothing.

Without an ear there can be no sense of music, without an eye no enjoyment of light, and without the whole human form, there cannot be perfect human happiness; and as men and women in bodily identity we shall live beyond the grave. In looking forward to the other life, it is not to the shadowy and barmacide felicities of disembodied spirits, but to a personal existence in every respect as real as existence in the present world. Death destroys nothing essential to manhood. The *material* body is not man: what is more, it is not an essential part of man. It is usual to say, that man possesses a soul; but according to the Word of God man possesses no such thing. The truth is, man possesses a material body; but of man himself, it is recorded in Gen. ii. 7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *man became a living soul.*" He does not possess a soul, but he is a soul. Putting off the material body, the man as an immortal being passes into the spiritual world, not a loser, but a gainer by the

transition. In the spiritual world, he possesses a body, just the same as here; but as everything there is spiritual, the body is perfectly adapted to its new environment, and it is spiritual also. It is the soul that makes the body, not the body the soul. With an insight far beyond his own age, Spenser wrote:

> "Every spirit, as it is most pure,
> And hath in it the more of heavenly light,
> So it the fairer body doth procure
> To habit in:
> For of the soul the body form doth take,
> For soul is form and doth the body make."

The soul is master of its own needs; it is the real man; and when it lays aside the material body, having no further use for it, it passes into the spiritual world, and is there clothed with another body in perfect correspondence with the nature of that world. The Bible itself is the authority for this doctrine, and in the words of the Apostle Paul, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."—1 Cor. xv. 44. The first condition of sociality, in that

of a personal form and organisation, endowed with all the powers of enjoyment, is amply provided for in the world to come; and in the New Church we therefore believe, that the future life is lacking in nothing conducive to the happiness of angelic men and women as social and immortal beings.

The second essential to social life is difference of sex. The question is sometimes asked, Shall we be men and women in the after life, as we are here? or shall we be neutralized, and become other than we are? The old idea was, that angels were transformed by death, and lost their former identity. But though the belief is both old and popular, yet it is alike contrary to reason and Scripture. The future world is always regarded as a place where justice will be done both to the good and the evil; and it is a place where every man and every woman will be called upon to stand alone, on the simple worth of inherent character. In that world, one person cannot shield another. The guilty cannot escape, and the innocent cannot go unblessed. In proof of

this doctrine, the Lord's declaration is, "I will give unto every man,"—not some one else,—but "every man, according as his work shall be."

In the light of this truth, personal identity is therefore a necessity of justice; let there be the slightest change either in form, disposition, or organic structure, and we cease to be the same persons. In the case of the wicked, some one else would be punished, and not the guilty, who in this world had violated the laws of God; and in the case of the regenerate, some one else would be blessed, and not the saintly soul who had resisted temptation, and laid down his own interest in the cause of right. The whole idea of heavenly felicity as the result of human excellence on earth, rests on personal identity. Reason affirms that it must be so; and the Word of God throughout places the whole subject beyond question. In speaking of Dives and Lazarus in the spiritual world, each retained both the name and character by which he was known in the present life; the angel in the Revelation by John, identified himself as one of the prophets; and

when Moses and Elias appeared in glory, they were known and recognized by the characters they had acquired on this side the grave. Every element of true social life in this world, is discovered in those who have passed from us to the life beyond. There is no change of sex; they possess the individuality they had here; they are identical in every particular with their old selves; they are not changed an iota,—save in the one fact, that they are now in a spiritual instead of a material body.

Resting our faith confidently on Scripture evidence, we in the New Church therefore believe, that social life among the angels depends upon the same factors as society on earth. The contemplation of that world sends us back to our own fireside, to our friendships, to the festive board, and to the altar of God with a new sense of the solemnity of life. It bids us set our own houses in order here, and live to-day as the only basis of what we hope to enjoy in the great hereafter. As the fulfilled dream of a perfect society, heavenly harmonies must all be

initiated here; in studying that life we are taught to stand in true relations now; and in us the great Father of mankind unites the now parted family on earth and in heaven.

Another essential in true social life is not only difference of sex, but difference of character, genius, taste, and station. Addison truly said, "There is a sort of economy in providence, that one shall excel where another is defective, in order to make men more useful to each other, and mix them in society." Pope puts it even better than Addison, he says :—

> "Heaven forming each on other to depend,
> A master, or a servant, or a friend,
> Bids each on other for assistance call,
> Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.
> Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally
> The common interest, or endear the tie.
> To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,
> Each home-felt joy that life inherits here."

Though it may perhaps be a new idea, yet we have every reason to believe, that perfect society in the world to come will be marked by all the characteristics which make society stable and

happy here. Heaven will not be one vast aggregation of mankind collected together without classification. Theologians have dreamed of a church in this world, bearing one name, united under one banner, living in the same organization, and moulded to one pattern; but it has never come, and it never will, because it is an impossibility. We might just as well desire uniformity in nature. Nature is divided into kingdoms, orders, families, and species, because it is the only way in which she meets all the requirements of man. It is precisely the same with different sections of the universal church. Each member of the Christian world, is drawn by the law of spiritual affinity into the particular community whose members are most like himself; and this is perfectly right and orderly, and illustrates the universal law everywhere operative in nature. The wrong comes, when sects claim rights and privileges for themselves which they deny to others, when they regard themselves as better than their neighbours because they profess some narrow little creed, and when they treat

those working for the same object as enemies, because they follow not with them. But if we cannot all be collected into one society, we may all be harmoniously related, in the unity of the spirit, and the bonds of peace. Variety in unity, is the only law of unity known to man. It is also, as much the law of heaven as the law of true society upon earth. The angels are attracted into relationships on the law with which we are perfectly acquainted here. They do not live at a common table, or under the shadow of one roof any more than we do; and in speaking to His disciples of this fact, the Lord Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

In the associations of men upon earth, we know that there are attractions and repulsions which defy argument. Good people are not all equally genial. You all know people, with whom you cannot be at home; and you all know good people, who are so distasteful to your own consciousness, that if they went to heaven you

would prefer remaining outside. The reason of this repulsion is, that your sense of good is different from their's. Each man is his own good, and there are as many kinds and degrees of good, as there are kinds of useful plants, animals, and minerals in nature. As the good, such is the affinity, sympathy, and attraction; and by the quality of his good, each one takes his place in the society of heaven.

Because all cannot associate in a promiscuous crowd, the Word of God uniformly speaks of heaven in the plural. St. Paul speaks of the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2; and in the Lord's Prayer, the exact text is, "Our Father who art in the heavens." To meet the requirements of its inhabitants, the heavens are not only three-fold, but each heaven is communal. Those of the same genius are attracted into association; and a common love unites them in common interests.

Based on spiritual affinities, society there is also real, and not artificial as it is here. There is no prestige from hereditary titles, from wealth, or from bluster and push.

Those angels that excel in might, are those that excel in humility. The greatest of all is the servant of all. In heaven, there are no place-hunters; no adventurers; no insincerities; no masked enmities; the character is proclaimed from the housetops; the face is an index of the real mind. The soul shows itself in every fibre of the spiritual form. The wisest angels are the most honoured; the gentlest and best are the most beautiful. Each one, from the simplest soul who has done God's will from unquestioning obedience, to Moses and Elias, takes his appointment by the sure choice of infinite wisdom; and in this adaptation of society to the social needs of angelic manhood, the promise is fulfilled, "In My Father's house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you."

In these social characteristics of heaven, we also see the true order, and law of society upon earth. There should be one spirit, with unlimited expression. In the presence of this spirit there is no room for the old sectarian bitterness. It

shows us that lasting relationships among men are based on unity of sentiment, with perfect freedom of opinion, and it places theology on the catholic expansiveness indicated by our Lord when speaking of the sower He said, "The field is the world." From its contemplation, we come back to society upon earth with new incentives to turn from discord to peace, and as we join in worship here we are led to acknowledge, that we are one of a company of congregations, federally bound to God by a common aspiration, and that our hymns of praise are only part of that universal symphony which in its fulness is heard in heaven.

But essential as diversity of character and many other factors are to perfect society, both on earth and in heaven, yet the one most important and most requisite to the complete happiness of man, is that of marriage. The Word of God gives us abundant proof, that in heaven there will be every essential of perfect social life as we understand it in the present state. There will be eating and drinking there, in proof of which

it is recorded in Psalm lxxviii. 24, 25, "He gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full." Also in Matthew xxvi. 29, "I say unto you, I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." There will also be rich and exquisite clothing in heaven, for "The fine linen is the righteousness of saints."—Rev. xix. 8. It is also quite certain that women in the loveliness of youth will be in heaven. In Rev. xiv. 4, we are told that a new song was sung in heaven by a chorus of 144,000 virgins, and of them it is written, "These were *redeemed from among men*, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb."

But whatever other essentials may be furnished, it is still true, that without marriage, society, properly understood, comes to an end. Leave marriage out of the home, and it is like taking colour from the rainbow, or summer from the seasons. The unit of society is not man by himself, or woman by herself; but the two made one

by the ties of complementary natures. It is, however, very much to be feared, that the true relation of the sexes in marriage is at present but very imperfectly understood. Sex is first of all a spiritual distinction, a distinction of mind, and as the result of this, it is a distinction in physical form. Marriage also, in its highest and best sense, is for spiritual purposes. Woman is a form of affection; man is a form of wisdom. In a true marriage the two are perfectly united, making one dual mind; and when a true and real marriage is once made, it is never dissolved. The modern question, Is marriage a failure? rests on a misconception of what marriage is. Correctly understood, marriage is never a failure. It is the civil contract, based on wealth, honour, and other worldly considerations, and which the interested parties mistake for marriage, because it is ratified in church, that fails. Once made, a true marriage is never unmade; and it is as much needed to complete the happiness of the angels in heaven, as the happiness of man upon earth.

At this point it will perhaps be objected, "But

it is distinctly stated by the Lord Jesus that marriages do not take place in heaven." In His own words, "For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."—Matt. xxii. 30. And I admit at once, and without reservation, that as it is commonly interpreted, as generally talked about even by married people, and as regarded by the young, it is quite safe to affirm, that marriages do not take place in heaven.

Much as novelists have written about courtship and marriage, there is scarcely one writer from Bulwer to Scott, who has given us any idea of what a true marriage is. Religious considerations are scarcely ever mooted; and that marriage is either spiritual or nothing, never seems to have been suggested even to Dickens, or George Eliot. As it is taught in novels, love is only a refined paganism, and not the highest form even of that. I am quite aware that at present, we think much that appears in fiction is very beautiful. The situations are often admirably chosen, the air of romance thrown around the principal figures is

very captivating, and the heroic sentiments of devotion expressed by manly lips to womanly beauty, take most readers by storm. But when devotion is analysed, when love is traced to its origin, when vows of fidelity are clearly understood, it is not once in fifty times that marriages are made to rest in religion, which they must be, to be lasting. Of all marriages based upon beauty of form and face,—blessings of course not to be despised; or of those based upon equality of fortune, and position; or upon similarity of taste merely, or upon common opinions, and indeed upon anything short of consecration to a higher, a better, and a diviner life, we may safely assert that such marriages are unheard of in heaven.

A true marriage is as ideal as heaven itself. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son."—Matt. xxii. 2. The oneness of a true marriage is the union of the higher and purer aspirations both of man and woman, and the exclusion from mutual sympathy of what is selfish and evil. There is,

and there can be no unity between natures that are base. There may be a bond, there may be a kind of friendship, there may be a compact resting upon mutual interest, but unity can take place between man and woman, only when they are high, pure, unselfish, noble, and godlike. And if there is nothing that is high, pure, unselfish, and godlike, there may be a civil compact, but there cannot be a marriage.

Whoever would be truly married must first look out for intelligence, common sense, virtue, honesty, purity of heart, good judgment, and strong love; if money should be added to these, so far so good; if beauty is also superadded, so much the better; and if accomplishments are in waiting, better still. But no matter whether beauty and wealth are there or not, a true marriage never did, and never will take place without the presence of intelligence, and purity of heart. Spiritual love and spiritual wisdom are the only lasting bases of all married life; these are the principles which eternally unite men and women, and of those who are thus

united, it is written, "Wherefore they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder."—Matt. xix. 6.

Referring directly to marriage as spoken of in the passage before us, it is to be borne in mind that a real marriage as just delineated was not understood. The person to whom the Lord directed His remarks was a Sadducee, the parent of the modern materialist. He believed only in material nature. He denied the existence of the soul, immortality, heaven, hell, and believed that this life was the beginning and the ending of human hopes. This being his creed, marriage with him was a material contract; really, he knew no more about marriage than a Mormon or a Turk; he thought marriages were based upon the senses only, and that they could be made any number of times by the same person.

Having caught the idea from the Lord Jesus, that all marriages are eternal, which is perfectly true as the Lord understood them, he thought to confound Him with His own doctrine, and enquired

in a spirit of ridicule, if all the seven marriages by one woman were eternal, and if so how the woman would be disposed of. The Lord answered a fool according to his folly. Having no idea of marriage beyond a sensual compact, He answered him according to that monstrous notion; and said He, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." And in this the Lord expressed a literal truth to be accepted for all time.

But because the Lord answered a gross materialist according to his corrupt fancies, we are not therefore to conclude that He implied the utter dissolution of marriage relationships at death. This is contrary to the express testimony of Scripture. The relations of men in the other life are always spoken of in terms which imply the existence of loving attachments, family unity, and true marriage ties based on spiritual relations. St. Paul in writing to the Ephesians states, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of

the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."—Eph. iii. 14. And in speaking of the Gentiles converted to the Gospel, his words are, "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."—Eph. ii. 19.

Sex is not merely a difference in physical form, but an eternal difference of mind. A woman is a woman in mind, and always will be; and the same with man. Nothing can ever change them. Man in the present world will take his nature with him, and remain man in the next; and woman will also retain her womanhood. "God has implanted mental and moral distinctions in our respective natures, which no circumstances can change or eradicate. He has created them; and it is not in our power to alter or destroy them." On this fact, we may expect to meet in the other world those whom we have loved, those whom we may still love, and with whom we may once more renew true spiritual sympathy and attachments. And on this Divine idea, that it is between two

minds, two souls linked together by the eternal ties of love in the woman and wisdom in the man, a true marriage is never unmade; it continues in the life to come, and the command is fulfilled, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

And now gathering up the scattered threads of social life in heaven, as furnished alike by the human heart and the Word of God, we may clearly see what is universally believed, that heaven is our home. In this new view of heaven, not made by guessing, but resting on the evidence of Divine truth, the questions of the bereaved as they sit in solitude, "Shall we meet again? shall we know each other? shall we be near each other? will family relationships be continued? and shall we perpetuate the friendship begun here?" are all answered. The relationships, based on the higher and lasting affinities of love, will all continue, and continue in their heightened and glorified form; but all else, as indeed they ought to do, will pass away.

In this view, we think of those who have gone to heaven, not as unsexed and wandering for ever in the dreary negation of suspended sympathies; but we think of them with all our old attachments, and in forms perfected through the influence of the higher life. Heaven is our home in its highest and happiest sense. A nunnery is not a home; a monastery does not furnish the idea of a home; a sexless, loveless, celibate establishment, no matter where situated, whether on earth or in paradise, does not inspire us with the associations of home. Heaven is not a home if those we have loved are not there. It is not a home if the idea of mother and father, brother and sister, is absent. The Bible warrants no such insanity. Its pictures of perfected life are radiant with woman's tender sympathies; with man's wisdom and strength; with childhood's innocence; and with all the endearments and joys of social life here. But even in heaven, nothing is given for nothing; and heaven is our home because the spiritual peace, love, gentleness of spirit, and holy regard

for others in our own souls, have made our homes on earth a foretaste of heaven.

Home is a word of many meanings, but there are only two which at present claim our attention. The first meaning of home is a dwelling-house, or the place or country in which we reside; and the second meaning is employment in what is most delightful. Our home is always where our affections are centred. When a man is not at home in company, it means that he is ill-at-ease, out of his element, in society that does not please and gratify his affections, or he is employed in that for which he is not fitted, or in which he finds no pleasure. To be at home means to be in the delight of one's own affection, to be contented, in society that commands our sympathies, or in employment which we love, for which we are fitted, and by which we are blessed and gratified. Some people are at home in one thing, and others in another. Some people are at home in one kind of society, and others in another. The society that pleases one person displeases another, and yet one class of society

may be morally as good as the other. To be at home, we must have like symp thies with our associates, kindred tastes, similar aims, corresponding ideas, common interests, concordant dispositions, and harmonious desires and affections.

There is no home properly speaking, where a family is always in disorder, where children and parents disagree, or where husband and wife differ in tastes, ideas, religion, and morals. Home gathers into its glowing imagery the holy sympathies that heal, and reconcile, and save mankind; all that we love,—freedom, delight, and innocent pleasure,—the care and the looking after of those whose aims and hopes are one with our own,—who pull in the same direction, desire the same successes, and share in every way our good or evil fortune, our pleasure or pain. There is no word in the dictionary, higher in meaning and use than the word home; and in its highest signification, as our settled abode among those with whom we wholly sympathise, in whose company we experience

the keenest pleasure, and in employment which gives us the highest delight, heaven is our home. Heaven is a paradisaical home, a congregation of true and noble souls; it gathers into its bosom the true manhood of all ages, and embodies all the varied talents of humanity from all time. The life to come touches our natures on every side; but when we have exhausted all our imagery, and plucked the fairest flowers of poetry to decorate our fancies, the one image that affects us most deeply of all is, that heaven is our home.

Those who have truly loved us will love us still, all pure friendships will continue to pour refreshment on the soul; the mother will rejoice in all motherly affection, the child in all filial delight, all pure attachments between man and man, or between woman and man will be idealized and gratified; and in the felicities of home, with God as the great and only Father of all, that better world called heaven, beckons us upwards and onwards, and seeks to gather us into its abiding mansions. Every characteristic

becomes to us an incentive to goodness of life here, and bids us cultivate by wise thoughts and loving deeds, a heavenly state of mind. "And as our idea of heaven is supremely good and fair, always shedding its lustrous beauty on our toilsome road, to cheer and gladden us along the climbing way," let us cherish and practice all true and ennobling affections of love to one another in our daily life, so that when we leave the little circle of those we love on earth, we may go home to those we love in heaven.

VI.

HOW MEN BECOME ANGELS.

No subject connected with the life to come has been more hotly debated than the means and processes by which man is prepared for heaven. At this moment on this question, the theological world illustrates the confusion of tongues.

In some instances, the right of giving admission to heaven is claimed as a monopoly; and the keys of the kingdom of heaven are regarded as the property of a divinely-chosen and highly-favoured sect. It is however quite certain, that if the vanity of the claim does not injure those who make it, it is absolutely harmless to all mankind. Those who arrogate the privilege, are the only ones to suffer by the boast. There are as many ways terminating in heaven, as

there are ways to any other place. The New Jerusalem is described as having twelve gates, and on each side three. It is open to the whole world; and whether in northern, southern, eastern, or western states, so far as the possibility of entering the golden city is concerned, it is clearly indicated by the position of the gates, that no quarter of the earth possesses the slightest advantage.

But while heaven is open to the sincere of all the earth, and while even the painful devotions of the honest, but mistaken Fakir of India will surely give him a place in some heavenly society, yet the ways to heaven are not all equally wisely chosen; and while in the New Church we deny heaven to no one, not wilfully evil, yet in setting out for the heavenly city our hope of reaching it safely, rests entirely upon obedience,—not to human authority, but to the commandments of God; and with the Psalmist our confession is, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."—Psalm cxix. 105.

In seeking the attainment of angelhood, our

first care is to settle it once for all, that the angelic state is the sole, supreme, and final object of natural life. We are never to slight any part of human existence; this world is not to be sacrificed to the next; and the interests of the body, are not to be regarded as opposed to the interests of the soul. But while this is true doctrine, yet, it is a principle to be placed beyond controversy, that the interests of our present life are not ends in themselves; they are not to be separated from the life to come; they are not to be detached even for a single moment from the idea, that God's final purpose in the creation of the natural world is, to people heaven with angels. As prospective angels, we are not to look to secular ambition, to power, place, and the pleasures of the world and the flesh, for the end and aim of life. The great object of our toil, and the final issue of our endeavours, are to be placed in the other world. "We must regard heaven, our position in it, and our usefulness hereafter, as the objects of our love and aspiration. We must give supreme importance

to heavenly affections." We must not try to excuse our indifference to spiritual religion, by the plea that we do not see the force of its claims. The law is, "That truth is received as far as it is loved, and no further. Love opens and quickens the perceptions in whatever direction we look. The want of love is the only limitation to the mind's activity." And though it may be an unwelcome truth to many, yet spiritual and heavenly subjects are quietly shelved, not because they are difficult to understand, but because we care nothing about them. 'Two values are to be attached to everything on earth, the one natural and the other spiritual. As we were created to become angels, this earth in addition to its natural claims, is to be regarded as a preparation for heaven.' And in all our aspirations, the word of God is to be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path."

If now we turn to define the basis of angelic character and admission into heaven, we shall find that we possess, in the Sacred Scriptures,

the most perfect and definite guidance. In the Gospel by Matthew, chapter xvi., a conversation is recorded between the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Peter. The Lord put the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" to which Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon which the Lord replied, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock,"—meaning the truth he had just uttered,—"I will build My Church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kindgom of heaven." Through the misinterpretation of this passage, the worst despotism recorded in Christian history was founded. On this passage the right to confer angelhood and give admission into heaven was claimed by the Romish priesthood. A power grew up under their authority, which enslaved mankind body and soul; and though the greater part of Christendom is now happily free from this tyranny, yet it is still the boast of the Papacy, that the keys of Peter are deposited in their hands.

In the New Church, we believe that a key is the divinely chosen emblem of truth, and that the keys of heaven were assigned to Peter not as a mere man, but because he represented the principle of faith, and because he confessed the central truth both of the Church on earth and the Church in heaven, that Jesus Christ is the manifested God, and the supreme object of Christian worship. As the symbol of truth, a key has passed into the common language of daily life. We speak of the key to the mystery, the key to a work on arithmetic or algebra, the key to a fortress, and the key to some dark occurrence in human affairs; and in each case it is used as a symbol of truth. The key not only secures the slave, shuts up the prisoner, and forcibly detains the incautious and unwary, but it is also the passport to freedom, it liberates the captive, and opens the prison to them that are bound.

What a key is in the economy of physical life, the power of truth is to the mind. It is truth only that makes us free; it is truth that breaks

the mental yokes of error and superstition; it is truth that points the way of escape to those enslaved by habits of evil; it is truth that unlocks the gate of reform and introduces mankind to the realization of their dreams. But for truth, science would still rest in the thraldom of ignorance and credulity; the martyrs of science were the martyrs of truth; their researches among the rocks, and by the aid of the telescope, liberated the intellect, initiated the mental freedom we enjoy to-day, and insured the progress of the liberal arts. Truth is also the key to human happiness. We must know before we can do: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—John xiii. 17. Spiritual truth is also the key to the sacred Scriptures; it unfolds to us the nature and purposes of God, explains His Providence, and fixes the bounds to human responsibility and duty. Go wherever we may, truth is the key to our good; it is to be loved as the only custodian of our safety, happiness, and peace; and in the reverent acknowledgment of its Divine power, as revealed to us in the Gospels,

we rest confident that we possess the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

But the love of truth as a theoretic study is not enough. It is very delightful to stand amongst men as their intellectual equal, to understand all mysteries, and enjoy the light of knowledge. By our knowledge of the truth, we may see into heaven, we may know what is done there, and we may talk with facility of its joys; but while truth is the key to heaven, it is the life only which gives angelic character, and by which we pass individually and permanently beyond the gates of pearl. The knowledge of truth gives insight, but life only gives the title to personal presence in the angel world. It is what we do, not what we know, that makes the difference between the good and the evil. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous."—1 John iii. 7; and in answering the question of the young man, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" the reply of the Lord Jesus was, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—Matt. xix. 17.

As angels, we shall enjoy in heaven just what we have the capacity to enjoy. This too is the law of enjoyment here. It has been supposed that we go to heaven by an act of sovereign Divine mercy; but if this were possible, then all would go to heaven. It is the will of God that all should become angels; "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."—Matt. xviii. 14. But although God is omnipotent in all things, according to the order of His Divine wisdom, yet it is beyond the scope even of omnipotence to destroy human freedom and compel men against their own will. If men cannot be induced to obey the Divine law here, neither by persuasion, nor punishment, nor reward, there is no reason to believe they will either be persuaded or threatened into it beyond the grave. God gives all men the key to heaven, in the knowledge of truth; in this there is no necessary difference between the evil and the good. Even the evil may see the light of heaven. "He maketh His sun to shine on the good and

on the evil; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."—Matt. v. 45. But the inflexible law still is, "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments."

In the material world, God provides all the means for the sustenance of physical being. He gave the land, the seed, the air, the rain, the plants, flowers, trees, and grass, the sunshine, the cattle on a thousand hills, the flocks, and all the raw materials necessary to bodily existence; but He left the use of them to the intelligence and industry of man. We are not made comfortable and happy physically understood, by a sovereign act of Divine beneficence; but by wisely directed labour. The successful farmer, builder, manufacturer, or navigator, is he who possesses not only the most comprehensive knowledge of the laws of nature and the capacity of raw commodities, but who applies his knowledge in practical industry. The real value of man is never in what he knows; but in the use he makes of his information. We may know that our bodies require to be fed and clothed, we may

know how to weave every article of clothing, and produce every necessary and every luxury of bodily enjoyment; but unless we reduced our knowledge to practice, God would suffer us to starve to death.

All spiritual laws are announced through, and illustrated by nature. God has given us heavenly affections, He has provided us with the good seed, He has given us a spiritual mind to be planted with trees of righteousness, and cultivated until it becomes a garden of the Lord, full of all mental and moral excellences, and in the midst of which shall stand the tree of life,—type of love to God, —bearing twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. But though the Lord provides us with all spiritual gifts essential to angelhood; yet they are of no value whatever unless we use them.

Even supposing we were completely endowed with all angelic faculties; they would very soon be lost unless we kept them in constant use. Nothing is easier than to lose, what it took us years to acquire. An illustration of

this important fact occurs in the life of Charles Darwin. In his Autobiography he informs us that up to his thirtieth year, poetry of many kinds gave him great pleasure. He then writes, "I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music." Like a true man he deeply regrets his insensibility, and concludes: "The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature." *

Use is the only means by which we retain our powers. Work is just as necessary to the most perfect master of painting, sculpture, or music, as to the young beginner. To enjoy its effect, the eye must be accustomed to the light day by day. Let the eye be deprived of light either by wilfully turning from it, or by

* *Life and Letters*, etc., vol. i. pp. 100, 112.

compulsory exclusion, and it immediately degenerates; its powers fade, and the sight is lost. Blindness by degeneracy also becomes hereditary and organic. A small river runs in total darkness through the Mammoth cave in America; in that river fish are found; they have lived without the light age after age: the result is, they are not only blind, but blindness has become organic; and those fish have not only lost their sight, but they have lost the structure of the eye; and now all that remains of it is a small opaque speck.

For disuse, there is only one law throughout the universe. God has given us eyes to enjoy the light of heaven, and to rejoice in what we see of His spiritual world day by day; but they can be permanently retained, only as they are constantly used. If we care nothing for the light, if we turn from it, take no delight in it, close our minds against it, and turn our attention wholly to the material world around us, we shall gradually lose not only our enjoyment of it, but our capacity to receive it. The command there-

fore is, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."—John xii. 35.

What we affirm of the eye is equally true of the hand, the heart, the brain, the sympathies, and every power both of body and of soul. We become angels by using the faculties of angelhood, originally bestowed upon us as gifts of God. We have angel eyes by using the understanding to perceive heavenly light; we have angel hearts, by exercising the affections in mercy, love, and peace; we have angel hands by the Divine services we render to each other; and we have angels' feet, by running upon the errands of the Divine compassion set us in the precepts of His sacred Word. The Divine commandments are the laws of heaven; they "describe how the angels live;" and they describe how we must live if we are to share their bliss in the life to come. The Lord as our Saviour, has not relieved us from the labour of co-operating with Him; and He did not come to make it possible for us to become angels without obedience to His laws. As our Saviour, all that He has done, is to give us the

power to do His will if we choose, and in speaking of the means of attaining eternal life, His declaration is, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Another factor in the transformation of human into angelic life, is what our Bible calls re-birth. In speaking to Nicodemus, the Lord Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—John iii. 3. We are not placed in full possession of our powers all in a moment. The natural part of the mind is born with the body and comes into exercise and force at once. It takes cognizance of material objects, and grows in strength and vigour not only through the senses, but by secular education, by science, mathematics, languages, history, and experience. The natural degree of the mind is adapted to the requirements of the physical world, and we may all possess the full use of it, if we choose, to the extent of our genius and capacity.

Besides the natural, there is also a spiritual mind, which is within us potentially, and is

designed to become acquainted with the nature, laws, and characteristics of heaven. But this mind may or may not be developed, cultivated, and exercised at our own discretion. Until we love to think of God, study His attributes, read and meditate upon His revealed Word, and turn our attention to man as a spiritual being, and heaven as his eternal home, the spiritual mind remains like the butterfly in the chrysalis, or the chick in the egg, or the flower in the seed. And if it should happen that we never do love to think of spiritual subjects, the spiritual degree of the mind is never opened. If on the other hand, we love to think of heaven, the Divine Word, and the Divine Providence, the angelic mind comes into power, and we know by actual experience what the Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

But should we give heed to angel voices, and listen reverently to heavenly wisdom, the spiritual mind is not perfected all at once. No man has ever attained all the possibilities of knowledge even on the natural plane. Philo-

sophers, scientists, scholars,—all have laid down their tools confessing the truth that they must leave others to complete their labours. The higher the culture, the greater the sense of imperfection. Thus also it is with man as a spiritual being. There is only one law for the training of our powers, be they on the earthly or on the heavenly plane. As with the natural, so with the spiritual mind, its attainments are the result of education, growth, and culture. There are those who tell us that man is prepared for heaven by an act of sudden conversion; by repentance on the death-bed, and by the agency of faith alone, separate from the continued services of life-long charity. But we meet with no such teaching either in the Word or in the works of God. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," is true both materially and spiritually. We shall be just what our daily life makes us; and in the judgment, no instance is recorded in Scripture, in which either the good or the evil are questioned on matters of faith. Of those on the left hand, it was declared, "Inas-

much as ye did it not to the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me." While of the good it was again said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me," and as tested by their works only, both the good and the evil commenced their experience of the future life. The belief we hold in the New Church therefore is, that by the uniform testimony of Scripture, the angelic mind comes into command by a slow and steady growth, and not by an instantaneous act of faith.

If from the Word, we turn to the works of God, all of which illustrate the laws of spiritual being, we discover everywhere the sure law of gradual progression. There are no breaks in the processes of nature. Where the chain snaps the effect ends. Science demonstrates the fact, that the mountains were not upheaved mushroom fashion, in a single night; but that the earth subsided through untold ages, and that the sea followed the depression, leaving the mountains in their solitary grandeur, the slow and unceasing work of millions of years. The limestone of

all the earth, was not thrown off by creative force in a few years, but it too was made little by little, age after age, through the unwearying labours of myriads of tiny marine mollusca. In trees and flowers we discover the same order.

All growth is gradual; it is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. In human life the analogy is perfect. If St. Paul's conversion was the work of a few days; yet years afterwards he said, "When I would do good, evil is present with me;" and his further complaint is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—Rom. vii. 24. While in the New Church, we do not limit the mercy of God, and say that death-bed repentance is an impossibility, yet on the other hand, we have no warrant for teaching it as a doctrine of Scripture. And while we deny without reservation, the practical efficacy of faith alone, yet we set every store by faith as an incentive to right living; and with the Apostle James our confession is, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee

my faith by my works."—James ii. 18. As we would become angels, we are thrown back upon angelic sympathies in the present life, and if we would share a home in heaven, the assurance of the Lord Jesus is, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."—Matt. vii. 21.

Last of all, every angel in heaven is indebted to the ministry of natural death. Death has been painted as the king of terrors; but as Cotton remarks, it is really the terror of kings. Death is man's best friend. Like all God's greatest blessings, it is universal. Wealth is granted only to a few; power is reserved for the minority; and the same with the great bulk of the Divine gifts. But all God's greatest blessings are common to the race; and death is among the number. Here, we are in prison, but in the yonder world we shall be free. Here, the senses fail by age, but there, innocence and wisdom bring back the bloom and powers of youth. There are no old angels, as there are none

unwise. Here, the body is luggage; the mind speeds into the most distant regions and back, while the body has moved only a single step; but there, thought gives presence, and we are with those we love in an instant; and if the sympathy is heart deep, the presence becomes lasting. Nor is death a step in the dark; but an entrance into light. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." If we are not afraid to live here, we need not be afraid to live in the future world. Christ is King there, as He is here. At best, the body is only a temporary vesture, and if we have loved it wisely, taken care of it as a costly and finely woven garment, tight fitting and eminently useful, but in the end worn out and useless, we shall lay it aside at the last, not sadly but joyously, even as we lay aside the old vestment for the new on earth. To the good there is no death, in the vital sense of the word, but an advance in life. And while "nothing dies but something mourns," yet to man, physical death is only a golden sleep. As we weep beside the grave, the departed are sharing the first sweet

breath of that country, where never withering spring abides, and never fading flowers. In the material body, the last impediment to angel-hood has been laid aside for ever, and all is well.

A perfect, and beautiful illustration of what the death of the natural body means, comes to us through a Persian story, called the *Death of Abdallah.* The speaker is supposed to be the person who has just quitted the material form, and his words, are:

"Faithful friends, it lies, I know,
Pale and white, and cold as snow;
And ye say, 'Abdallah's dead,'—
Weeping at the feet and head.
I can see your falling tears;
I can hear your sighs and prayers;
Yet I smile and whisper this:
'*I* am not the thing you kiss!
Cease your tears and let it lie;
It *was* mine,—it is not I.'

Sweet friends, what the women lave
For the last sleep of the grave
Is the hut that I am quitting,
Is the garment no more fitting,
Is the cage from which at last,
Like a bird, my soul has passed.
Love the inmate, not the room;
The wearer, not the garb—the plume

Of the eagle, not the bars
That keep him from the splendid stars.

Loving friends, oh, rise and dry
Straightway every weeping eye;
What ye lift upon the bier
Is not worth one single tear.
'Tis an empty sea-shell,—one
Out of which the pearl is gone.
The shell is broken, it lies there;
The pearl, the *all*, the *soul* is here."

Following the example of Abdallah of old, "True wisdom thanks death to-day for what he takes and still more for what he brings, and like sentinels, it is for us to be ready, because we are uncertain; and calm, because we are prepared." If death should come early, "The shortest life is long enough, if it lead to a better;" and if it should come late, "It will bring a reprieve and not a sentence." In all cases it comes at the moment best suited to secure our eternal good: it comes as the only passport to the higher life, and through it and it alone, "We come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."—Heb. xii. 22.

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